THE NEW CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF

THE BIBLE

FROM 1750 TO THE PRESENT

EDITED BY

JOHN RICHES

THE NEW CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF

THE BIBLE

*

VOLUME 4

From 1750 to the Present

The political, technological and cultural upheaval of the past two and a half centuries has dramatically altered how we read and understand the Bible. This volume examines the Bible's role in the modern world – beginning with a treatment of its production and distribution that discusses publishers, printers, text critics and translators and continuing with a presentation of new methods of studying the text that have emerged, including historical, literary, social-scientific, feminist, post-colonial, liberal and fundamentalist readings. There is a full discussion of the changes in understandings of and approaches to the Bible in various faith communities. The dissemination of the Bible throughout the globe has also produced a host of new interpretations, and this volume provides a comprehensive geographical survey of its reception. In the final chapters the authors offer a thematic overview of the Bible in relation to literature, art, film, science and other disciplines. They demonstrate that, in spite of challenges to the Bible's authority in western Europe, it remains highly relevant and influential, not least in the Americas, Africa and Asia.

John Riches is Emeritus Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism at the University of Glasgow. His publications include *The Bible: A Very Short Introduction* (2000); *Conflicting Mythologies: Identity Formation in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew* (2000); and *Galatians through the Centuries* (2008).

THE NEW CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF

THE BIBLE

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Preface

The publication of *The Cambridge History of the Bible* between 1963 and 1970 marked an important step in the understanding of the history of the reception of the Bible. If biblical scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had principally concentrated their efforts on attempting to discern the original meaning of the biblical writings, this work drew together the findings of those who had had an eye to the many ways in which the Bible had through the centuries been read. It also, though more tentatively, looked at the way it had in turn affected those who had seen it as their central authoritative text. By the start of the new millennium, however, there was a growing perception that developments in scholarship over the previous forty years and, perhaps more importantly, deep-seated changes in the understanding of the place of theological and biblical studies within the wider intellectual landscape had made a revision of the original volumes desirable. A committee of international academics was appointed by Cambridge University Press to plan the new work, and sketched the broad outlines of the resultant four-volume work.

The present volume is probably the one with the greatest changes from the previous work. In the first instance, volume 3 of the original *Cambridge History of the Bible* covered the period from the Reformation to the present day. This period is now covered by volumes 3 and 4 of the new work, with the present volume covering the time from 1750. As importantly, the scope of *The Cambridge History of the Bible* was deliberately limited to the 'West', understood as 'western Europe and America [*sic*]' and looked only with much reserve at the 'impact of the Bible on the world'.[1] There seems indeed to have been some hope that the first two volumes might be followed by others which would look at other parts of the world. But while the two volumes envisaged in 1963 had become three by the time of their publication, the geographical

[1] *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 3, p. ix.

scope of the later volume was not enlarged. When the editors of the present *New Cambridge History of the Bible* met some forty years later to plan the present work, there was widespread agreement that this fourth volume must address the history of the Bible in the world outside western Europe and North America over the last 250 years as fully as possible.

One might say that the central task for this volume is to allow the diverse histories of the Bible in different parts of the world over the last 250 years to come more sharply into focus, in such a way that historians of the Bible and of world history may come to recognise its continuing contribution to cultural and social developments. It builds on the previous work in seeking to increase understanding of the great diversity of ways in which the Bible has been read over its 2,000-year history, not least by looking at its reception outside the 'western Church'; and it takes further tentative steps in the monumental task of understanding 'the impact of the Bible upon the world'.

A fuller account of the structure and the rationale of the present volume is to be found in the Introduction. Here it may be useful to indicate the main features of this volume. The first part looks at the production of the Bible in our period. It provides a detailed account of the developments in text-critical studies which shaped and continue to shape the actual form of the text which is printed. It then looks at developments in the production and distribution of bibles which made possible its widespread distribution throughout the world over the last two centuries. And finally, it considers the remarkable efforts of Bible societies and others to translate the Bible into an ever-growing number of languages across the world. No understanding of the impact of the Bible on the world can be gained without an appreciation of the achievements of those who have produced and distributed it. As actors in world history, the men and women of the Bible societies may not often catch the attention of historians, but the impact of their actions on the cultural history of the world is, like it or not, truly extraordinary.

The second part looks at historical and, broadly, theological ways of interpreting the Bible. There can be little gainsaying that the application of historical methods to the Bible in our period has been largely initiated and pursued in the 'West', though the use of such methods has, in the course of time, been widely disseminated through theological institutions across the globe. They are part of the legacy of the Enlightenment, and as such have come under increasing scrutiny in recent years. Recent developments in reception history reflect some of these concerns, and also indicate a switch in focus from the search for the original meaning of the biblical texts to a greater interest in the diversity of readings which the texts have generated. This, in turn,

resonates with the concerns of this current volume. The theological modes of interpretation discussed, by no means exhaustive, reflect a wider constituency than that of Western academic theologians, though they undoubtedly play their part. But there are other voices, voices from the 'poor and marginalised', from women, from those who have lived under colonial rule, and, significantly from outside the church, as with the chapter on Jewish modes of interpretation. Underlying all this is the growing interest in the role of the interpreter which has its roots in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics and gathers momentum through the period.

With the third, geographical, part, the volume breaks new ground. Here there is an attempt to cover the reception of the Bible in all parts of the world and to look indeed at its impact on society and politics. At the meeting which planned *The New Cambridge History of the Bible* there were those who felt that it would be very difficult to find contributors for this part, given the relative infancy of this subject of study. In the event, it has been a pleasure to discover the wealth of relevant research available. I hope that the contributions here will both inform readers new to the field and stimulate further research in this important area.

The fourth part again extends the scope of the volume beyond the confines of the Western church, and indeed beyond Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church. It looks too at the reception of the Bible in Orthodoxy; in Pentecostalism, a movement whose rapid growth since the publication of *The Cambridge History of the Bible* could hardly have been predicted; and also at the role that the Bible plays in discussions between people of different faiths. This and the previous part make it clear that the history of the Bible is a continuing history which will certainly require future revisions of what is written now.

A final part looks at the Bible thematically, considering its impact and involvement in politics, society, culture, literature, film, music and art, and science, and finally in popular piety, through the study of hymns. Again this reflects the growing body of work in these fields and reinforces the need for this current revision of the original work.

This has been an extended undertaking, and I have accrued many debts in its course. My thanks go firstly to all the contributors who accepted the invitation to participate, both for the quality of their work and for the great patience they have exercised as this project has slowly made its way to completion. Their willingness to respond promptly to enquiries at all stages has made the editorial process much less arduous and their willingness to engage in discussion of the issues has made it a pleasure. My thanks too to the editorial team at Cambridge University Press for all their support: to Kate Brett, who oversaw

the early planning stages, to Laura Morris, Anna Lowe and Aline Guillermet, who assisted along the way, and to those who oversaw the final production, Alexandra Poreda and Regina Paleski, Lin Maria Riotto, who provided the index, and finally to Mary Starkey, who took the art of copyediting to new heights.

J. R.

Abbreviations

ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*
ABS	American Bible Society
A&M	*Hymns Ancient and Modern*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
ASV	American Standard Version
BBC	Blackwell Bible Commentaries
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBCHB	*BBC Hymn Book*
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum Louvaniensium
BFBS	British and Foreign Bible Society
BS	The Biblical Seminar
BSL	Bible Studies League
CEBs	Comunidades Eclesiales de base
CH	*Church Hymnary*
CP	*Congregational Praise*
EH	*English Hymnal*
EKK	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ETS	Evangelical Theological Society
ExpT	*Expository Times*
FCSB	Fortress Classics in Biblical Studies
GBS	Guides to Biblical Studies
HA&MNS	*Hymns Ancient and Modern New Standard*
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HDG	Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte
HfTC	*Hymns for Today's Church*
HTB	Harper Torchbook
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IDBSup	*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplement*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS	*Journal of Church and Society*
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JTS	Jewish Theological Seminary
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*

KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuagint
MHB	*Methodist Hymn Book*
MQR	*Mennonite Quarterly Review*
MT	Masoretic Text
NIDPCM	*New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*
NIV	New International Version
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OBS	Oxford Biblical Studies
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
RIBLA	*Latin American Journal of Biblical Interpretation*
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RTS	Religious Tract Society
SASG	Suid-Afrikaanse Sendinggenootskap
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World
SofPE	*Songs of Praise Enlarged*
SPS	Studies in Peace and Scripture
ThR	*Theologische Rundschau*
TLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
TSK	*Theologische Studien und Kritiken*
UBS	United Bible Societies
WCC	World Council of Churches
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Introduction

JOHN RICHES

The period encompassed by this volume, from 1750 to the end of the twentieth century, is marked by rapid political, economic, cultural and social change. Politically, it sees the end of the *ancien régime* and the enormous constitutional changes which spread from the French Revolution, the growth of European empires and their fall in the aftermath of two world wars, and the emergence of global political institutions. There are similarly far-reaching economic and technological changes. The Industrial Revolution changed the face not only of European cities and their hinterlands but also of the colonies from which they extracted the raw materials and the luxury goods which they required to fuel their growth and patterns of consumption. The gold and copper mines as well as the tobacco, sugar, tea, cotton, rubber and coffee plantations of the New World and the East are striking evidence of this. But all this is only a precursor of the extraordinary developments in technology, including the recent emergence of information technology, which would make the present world wonderfully mysterious to those who were born into the first decades of our period. Such technological changes have made possible the emergence of a new world economy, of international concerns with immense economic power and reach, and of the new global cities with their hugely diverse and rapidly changing populations.

Alongside and, indeed, in conjunction with such dramatic political and economic changes go profound changes in the social and cultural life of peoples the world over. The cultural changes which spread across Europe in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, broadly grouped under the heading of the Enlightenment, challenged the old order not only politically and socially but also intellectually, questioning the basis of knowledge and morals in inherited belief and authority, and seeking new foundations for human understanding. It was an age of rationalism, of the criticism of all inherited authorities, and of a growing awareness of the historically conditioned nature of human existence. All forms of human culture – moral, intellectual, artistic,

religious – were subject to change and needed to be seen in the context of their historical development.

While such cultural changes have their roots in Europe, over the next two centuries they would spread across the globe, carried by advances in trade and technology, a not always welcome companion of new forms of prosperity and health and opportunity for some and of oppression and dispossession for others.

Giving an account of the place of the Bible within such changes is at least as complicated a matter as that of accounting for the political, economic and cultural changes so lightly sketched in the previous paragraph. If there might be some justification for the very Eurocentric view taken there, not least because it was in Europe – and North America – that lay the major concentrations of political and economic power for most of the period, there can be no such justification for a similarly unifocal view of the history of the Bible over the last two and a half centuries.

Were one to focus attention largely on European and North American developments in the understanding and use of the Bible during the period, one might well present a picture of waning influence, of a gradual retreat in the face of an increasingly confident secular culture which sought to outlaw the Bible and its advocates from the spheres of international and national politics and of personal and social ethics. Even such a picture would of course need qualification, not least in the light of the powerful influence of the Christian Right in US American politics of the last generations but also of the power of apocalyptic rhetoric to inspire reformatory and revolutionary zeal.

Such an account, however, would give little or no sense of the social and cultural struggles which have centred round the Bible in other parts of the world. We need only think of the very different positions occupied by the Bible in various African countries, in Latin America and in the Indian subcontinent to realise how inescapably distorted any unifocal account of the development of the Bible globally would be. A global account will need to do justice to the great diversity of particular cultural histories in which the Bible has become embedded and to its role in their development.

This represents a significant change from the previous *Cambridge History of the Bible* (*CHB*).

The scope of the *CHB* was deliberately limited to the 'West', understood as 'western Europe and America [*sic*]' and looked only very tentatively at the 'impact of the Bible on the world'.[1] There seems indeed to have been some

[1] *CHB*, vol. 3, p. ix.

hope that the first two volumes might be followed by others which would look at other parts of the world. But while the two volumes envisaged in 1963 had become three by the time of their publication, the geographical scope of the later volume was not enlarged. When the editors of the present *NCHB* met some forty years later to plan the present work, there was widespread agreement that this fourth volume must address the history of the Bible in the world outside western Europe and North America over the last 250 years as fully as possible.

One might say that the central task for this volume is to allow the diverse histories of the Bible in different part of the world over the last 250 years to come more sharply into focus, in such a way that historians of the Bible and of world history may come to recognise its continuing contribution to cultural and social developments.

How then is a composite volume such as this to reflect the diversity of histories which are associated with the Bible over the last two and a half centuries? How can we do justice to the fact that the centres of world power – or rather the politically, economically and militarily most successful centres of world power – were for much of the period located in Europe and North America and that developments in such centres which bore on the Bible were rapidly transmitted round the world, leaving their immediate impact, while recognising that other centres also had their own histories which involved the Bible in ways whose influence on future developments in world culture and politics may not have been so immediately evident but which may well yet be of even greater importance in the longer run? And who can yet say which is historically more important?

The structure of the volume attempts to address such questions. It starts as pragmatically as may be by asking how the Bible *as book* was produced and distributed throughout the period. This in turn breaks down into three discrete questions, about the production of the text of the Bible, about the production and distribution of bibles, and about the translation of the Bible into languages other than Greek and Hebrew. It is evident that this is a history which has roots which run back long beyond our particular period. Eldon Epp's chapter of text criticism started life as a discussion of our period alone, but was soon extended to cover developments in the period stretching back to the Reformation covered by volume 3. Again, it is widely acknowledged that the development of the printing press in the fifteenth century made possible the rapid spread of the Reformers' ideas and above all the distribution of affordable bibles. This process accelerates during our period and, with the rise of the Bible societies, extends its reach over the world. And, finally, the process of translating the

biblical text into different languages is integral to the production of the Bible itself. The Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Septuagint, is not just a translation of a Hebrew original; it also has a life of its own and, at the least, contains material not to be found in the Hebrew texts, just as its language exerts a formative influence on much of the New Testament. Indeed, the process of translation is continuous as ever new versions are produced in Syriac, Aramaic, Ethiopic, Coptic, Latin, Armenian and more.

In our period this process of bible production has clearly identifiable origins in Europe and North America. Without the work of the European and North American Bible Societies, the rapid spread of the Bible across the world is unthinkable. At the same time, the massive and continuing undertaking of the Bible societies and of many churches in providing translations of the Bible into the languages of every continent required the involvement of indigenous linguists and of those expert in their own local cultures. The question how to translate the various biblical words for 'God' into, say, African languages immediately raises much wider issues about the inculturation of the Bible into the world of African traditional religion. The process of production, translation and distribution of bibles by European Bible societies in Africa is far from being one of a simple imposition of an alien cultural artefact onto passively receptive peoples. In the first place, it requires their participation and cooperation in the production and translation process; but, secondly, the process itself transforms the Bible which now appears in the printed, translated version. It is a Bible mediated through another language which belongs to, shapes, and is shaped by another culture with its own beliefs and practices. And this new Bible in turn now shapes and rejuvenates the language and the culture into which it has been rendered. The distribution of the Bible across the globe marks the beginning of a new history which will have its own dynamic and independence of its Western sponsors, so much so that one day it may return to challenge and unsettle them.

The second part looks more closely at the development of new methods of study of the Bible and at the theological debates which grew up over our period around its interpretation. Again this is in origin largely a western European and North American phenomenon. Even today these are topics whose principal fora will be found in the West, notably in the large annual gatherings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature. What the first part of this section documents, the rise and development of historical critical methods of study of the Bible, has undisputed origins in the emergence of a raised historical consciousness in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe. The methods described here were developed

by scholars who saw the need to give an account of the biblical texts which would meet the criticisms of religion's cultured despisers. They needed to give an account of how the religious beliefs and practices which are documented in the Bible emerged out of their particular historical contexts. This would require close study of other contemporary religious cultures, of the material evidence contemporary to the documents, and of the historical formation of the documents themselves. Later developments in scholarship would consider the social character of such developments and look to sociological studies for illumination. More recent work still would seek to understand the history of the reception of the documents themselves. It might be said that this present volume is itself an example of such work, as it looks to understand the impact the Bible has had on the world over its period.

Such methods, when applied with a radical historical thoroughness, posed formidable questions to those who looked to the Bible as a source of transcendent truth and enlightenment. The second half of this part attempts to document some of the debates and controversies which emerged as a result of the production of such historical accounts of the Bible.

The issues were sharply posed in the first half of the nineteenth century by scholars in Germany who drew on the thought of Hegel and who were closely associated with the Theological Faculty in Tübingen, notably F. C. Baur and D. F. Strauss. This led to the wider development of forms of liberal theology, which in turn met with fierce opposition from more conservative theologians. These debates took a sharp turn after the First World War with the development of Dialectical theology in a group of theologians around Karl Barth. A different direction, deriving in part from his close dialogue with Martin Heidegger, was taken by Rudolf Bultmann with his phenomenologically informed analysis of biblical faith. Such debates centre round the quest for a link between the religious ideas and expressions of the biblical text and forms of thought and expression contemporary to the theologian. While some may wish to argue for a view of the Bible as transcending the barriers of time and space, others will continue to search for contemporary dialogue partners who can provide keys to unlock the meaning of these ancient texts. The study of such attempts at interpretation, hermeneutics, has become an art in itself and is itself the topic of one of our chapters.

Most of what is discussed in this part is located within the Christian tradition, even though some of its practitioners may have been seen as deeply opposed to it. Historical studies of the Bible also make themselves felt within the Jewish communities of Europe, North America and Israel. Here the story is complicated both by the exclusion of Jewish scholars from the main European

and North American educational institutions for much of the period and by Jewish perceptions of the anti-Semitic nature of much higher criticism, in particular of Wellhausen's Pentateuchal criticism.

Alongside these attempts at opening up the contemporary meaning of texts from very different cultures and contexts, there are approaches to the Bible which take their starting point in contemporary cultural, social, economic and political issues, where the language and religion of the Bible has its own particular history and effect: issues around global poverty, discrimination against women, colonialism. Here the starting point lies in reading the biblical texts alongside and through the experience of exploitation and oppression to which the Bible has itself contributed.

It is here that the study of the Bible begins to break out of its Western confines, is taken up and developed by those outside European and North American universities and seminaries, and becomes rooted in the struggles of peoples across the globe for freedom and dignity. Liberation theology certainly draws on Western academic study of the Bible as well as on the political writings of Marx and others, but what gives it its innovative force is the dialogue between the poor of Latin America and theologians trained in Western methods. What they articulate in their writings is the outcome of reading the Bible through the eyes of the poor and the marginalised, or, as it is sometimes put, of reading with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. In this context the Bible emerges as a deeply ambiguous book, one that can provide ideological support to the powerful in their oppression of the poor, but also one which can lend strength and encouragement to the poor in their struggle for liberation.

If liberation theology has its origins in Latin America, feminist theology has its roots partly in the Western Enlightenment tradition and partly in the experience of women in North America and Europe campaigning for greater freedom and justice in all walks of life. The Bible is measured by this particular experience of struggle, and in the process its contribution to women's subjugation as well as, at least for some, its resources for liberation are sighted. And if this begins as a process in North American campuses, it is one which will be taken up by women across the world, reflecting their different experiences of oppression.

Post-colonial studies, somewhat by contrast, have their origins in the work of scholars from formerly colonised countries who have taken up positions in North American universities. They in turn have influenced the way that scholars across the globe, both from the colonised and the colonisers, have come to read the Bible historically and as a guide for contemporary practice.

Our period is, we have said, one which sees dramatic change in the religious map of the world. The real surprises for readers of this volume of the *NCHB* may well come more from the sections on the place and role of the Bible in the confessions and in different areas of the world than in the earlier sections, concerned with the intellectual struggle for the understanding of the Bible, springing from the Enlightenment. At its most simple, it might appear that in the heartlands of the Reformation the Bible is being gradually wrested from the control of those who claimed it as their own and built their communities upon it, while in other parts of the world, and indeed in other confessional communities, the Bible is being rediscovered, bringing new communities to life, inspiring people to seek new freedoms, to find strength, succour and hope around this remarkable collection of texts. The true picture is more complex, more complex indeed than a volume of this size can convey.

The time to reflect on this history will be at the end of this volume, when all is gathered in. In part this will occur in the final thematic section, which will allow for a cross-cutting approach, looking at particular topics as they are dealt with in different geographical areas and faith communities, in part in the volume's epilogue. What is perhaps most intriguing about this enquiry is the opportunity it offers to consider how control of the biblical texts is constantly changing hands. If at the beginning of the period the Bible is a text regarded, say, within the Roman Catholic Church as potentially subversive and therefore to be controlled firmly by the teaching of the magisterium, with biblical scholars finely constrained and, as in the Modernist crisis, disciplined, the later part of the period sees remarkable developments, with Roman Catholic biblical scholars playing a leading role in the development of critical Johannine scholarship and in the development of biblical studies with an inculturationist stance in Africa. But it is not just at the scholarly level that such changes occur: the resurgence of biblical study, the placing of biblical exposition at the centre of the life of congregations, the role of the Bible in base ecclesial communities in Catholic churches in Latin America, all these are matters which show how dramatic the change has been. How far this has been steered and encouraged by the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church itself, not least through the Second Vatican Council, how far even the Council was itself acknowledging developments with deep roots within the life of the church itself is a matter for discussion. Similar changes in direction and focus can be observed in most churches. Perhaps only within Orthodoxy, with its history of living under Ottoman and communist rule, has biblical study been restricted almost entirely to the task of translation and dissemination of Scripture. More remarkable is the extraordinarily rapid growth of new churches which

find in the Bible inspiration and support for their communities, as with the burgeoning Pentecostalist churches, whose members are now said to number one in twenty-five people in the world. It is clear that those who find support and hope in such churches, where the study of the Bible plays a central and empowering role, find something that they have not found elsewhere – often not in the more traditional churches. It is also clear that the extreme mobility of our current world makes it possible for such movements to spread rapidly from one country to another, so that people round the world are faced with a bewildering variety of religious choice which in turn restricts the power of church leadership to control their people.

If there is a struggle for control within and between confessional groups, there has also been – and continues to be – a similar struggle between the churches in the West, which were in large measure those who brought the Bible, and the peoples in Africa, America and Asia to whom they brought it. It was widely thought that, with the end of colonialism in Africa, Christianity, with its strong associations with the former colonial powers, would become a discredited, declining force. Instead, Christianity in Africa grew dramatically to the point where, say, Anglican Christians in Africa (in Nigeria alone) far outnumber those in the UK and the USA. This shifting of numerical preponderance to other parts of the world poses massive problems for such confessional bodies, particularly for one with the episcopal polity of the Anglican communion. And again, the Bible plays a significant role both in the day-to-day life of Anglicans in Africa and other parts of the world and in the bitter disputes between 'liberal' and 'traditionalist' provinces within Anglicanism over the ordination of women and those living in same-sex relationships. This is only one example of the ways in which the Bible both influences and is fought over in the struggle for the future of world Christianity. More interesting, perhaps, is the way in which within each continent the Bible assumes new forms and new meanings. If in Africa it will assume a place as one of the most powerful of all literary and religious texts, the same is clearly not true in Asia, where it needs to claim a place among the rich library of religious texts with deep historical roots in the existing cultures. Such changes in the Bible's cultural environment will have a long-term impact on the understanding of the Bible across the world, and will in all likelihood reshape its relationship to other religions and cultures. If to this point the Bible has played a perhaps muted role in dialogue between the religions of the world, this may now begin to change.

A final part will look at the different ways in which the Bible has been received in different spheres of cultural and social life. The social, literary, cultural and political history of texts provides remarkable examples of the

ways in which texts can affect and influence the worlds which come after them. Among such histories, the history of the biblical texts can certainly lay claim to be among the richest, to have inspired some of the finest literature, poetry, music, art, hymnody, films, to have been caught up in many of the political, social and intellectual debates in each generation. The final part will document some of these cultural flowerings of the Bible, while an epilogue will attempt to draw out some the major changes which have occurred in the understanding and status of the Bible during our period.

PART I

⋆

PRODUCING THE TEXT

1

Critical editions and the development of text-critical methods, part 2: from Lachmann (1831) to the present*

ELDON EPP

New Testament textual criticism had already developed significantly when its modern period began. The first pivotal event was the initial publication by Erasmus of a critical text of the Greek New Testament in 1516. That period closed at the outset of the 1800s with Johann Jakob Griesbach's sophisticated criteria for determining the earliest surviving text, but the discipline still lacked a genuine critical edition of the Greek New Testament, that is, an edition with a freshly constructed eclectic text holding the place of honour at the head of its pages. Rather, virtually every edition to this point retained the *textus receptus* (the 'received text' or the abiding ecclesiastical text) in that pre-eminent position. It was not that critical principles for creating an entirely fresh edition were lacking, but it was the failure to apply those criteria and the accompanying reluctance to take the bold step of abandoning the *textus receptus* that delayed this logical achievement.

Only in the first third of the nineteenth century – three hundred years removed from the Erasmus text – would Karl Lachmann produce such a landmark edition (1831), which constituted the second pivotal juncture in the development of New Testament text-critical methodology. The history of critical editions and the development of text-critical methods relating to the Greek New Testament up to Griesbach and into the early nineteenth century are treated in part 1 of this essay (in volume III). This new phase may be described as follows:

* Part 1 of this discussion, which treats the subject of this chapter from Erasmus into the early nineteenth century, may be found in volume III, chap. 5. Both parts owe much to my earlier research while a Fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation (1974–5), which resulted in an article, 'Eclectic Method' (1976).

The rise of an eclectic text and the departure from the *textus receptus*

Dominance of external evidence

The initial publication of the Greek text by Erasmus was followed in the next two centuries by rudimentary critical editions with limited presentations of variant readings, such as those by Robert Estienne (Stephanus, 1550), Brian Walton (1657) and John Fell (1675). The first major critical edition by John Mill (1707), with its voluminous apparatus of variants, set the standard for all editions that were to follow, including those by Gerhard von Maestricht (1711), J. A. Bengel (1734), J. J. Wettstein (1751–2) and J. J. Griesbach (1775–1807), which, as noted, all printed some form of the *textus receptus* as their text (and all are discussed in volume 3 of the present work).

This format, however, changed decisively with the 1831 Greek Testament of Karl Konrad Friedrich Wilhelm Lachmann,[1] who, like Richard Bentley before him, was a pre-eminent classical scholar. In line with Lachmann's goal of presenting the text as it existed in the fourth century, he was compelled (unlike his predecessors) to formulate a fresh text, and – as we shall see – his principles for its selection meant that the 'received readings' (that is, those in the *textus receptus*) deserved no consideration. Rather, in seeking the earliest attainable text, he extracted readings from the oldest known majuscules and Latin manuscripts, and the ante-Nicene writers. Thereby, Lachmann's Greek text became the first to be recognised as a decisive break from the *textus receptus*, which in some form stood at the head of the pages in virtually all preceding editions. Accordingly, his edition initiated a new era in the textual history of the Greek New Testament.

Lachmann's principles for constructing his text initially appeared in his first edition (1831) in fewer than one hundred words,[2] indicating that he followed 'nowhere his own judgment', but 'the usage of the most ancient eastern

[1] On Lachmann see Tregelles, *An Account*, pp. 97–115; Tregelles, 'Introduction', pp. 133–7; Scrivener and Miller, *Plain Introduction*, vol. II, pp. 231–5. Also Gregory, *Canon and Text*, pp. 452–5; Kenyon, *Handbook*, pp. 286–8; Schaff, *Companion*, pp. 254–6; Vincent, *History*, pp. 110–14; C. O. Brink, *English Classical Scholarship: Historical Reflections on Bentley, Porson, and Housman* (Cambridge: James Clarke; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 136–8; and esp. Timpanaro, *Genesis*, pp. 75–89, 115–18. Lachmann's views elicited harsh criticism and often unfair attacks, as exemplified in the less than charitable assessment in Scrivener and Miller, but Tregelles came to his defence (see his long note in *An Account*, pp. 115–17).

[2] Latin text given in Gregory, *Textkritik*, pp. 966–7, and in Tregelles, *An Account*, p. 98 n.⋆. Lachmann also refers the reader of his first edition to his article of the preceding year, 'Rechenschaft über seine Ausgabe des Neuen Testaments von Professor Lachmann in Berlin', *TSK* 3 (1830), pp. 817–45, for the rationale and plan of the edition, though it contains neither a list nor a discussion of critical canons.

churches' (his 'Italian' or Eastern text) as a first principle of selection. When the evidence was not consistent, he preferred the reading established by the agreement of the 'Italian and African' witnesses (the latter being his Western text). In cases that were not resolved by these criteria, Lachmann placed brackets in the text and alternative variants in the margin to note his indecision and to display other possible readings. However, in his second edition (1842–50), whenever possible, Lachmann relied on the combined witness of his two textual groups, the Eastern text (Codices A, B, C and H^p, and Origen) and the Western (notably D, D^p, E^p, G^p; the Old Latin manuscripts *a*, *b*, *c*, *g* and Vulgate manuscripts A and F; and Irenaeus, Cyprian, Hilary and Lucifer). He did not include Syriac and Coptic witnesses since he did not know those languages. Codex Vaticanus (B or 03), his leading authority, was the oldest known witness in his day, though not yet had it been competently collated. Lurking behind Lachmann's two early text groups, of course, was the *textus receptus*, so that Lachmann's textual groups were three, like most before and after. (See the discussion under Johann Albrecht Bengel in part 1, in vol. III, and under Westcott–Hort and beyond, below.)

Lachmann's further text-critical criteria, in systematic fashion, appeared in the preface to his second edition (1842–50) as follows:

1. Nothing is better attested than that on which all authorities agree.
2. If some of the authorities are silent or defective, the weight of evidence is somewhat lessened.
3. When the witnesses are of different regions, their agreement is of more importance than when those of some particular locality differ from the rest, either from negligence or from set purpose.
4. When witnesses of different widely separated regions disagree, the testimony must be considered to be doubtfully balanced.
5. When readings are in one form in one region and in another form in another region, with great uniformity, they are quite uncertain.
6. Lastly, readings are of weak authority when not even the same region presents a uniform testimony.[3]

Obviously these guidelines are all *external criteria* (factors in assessing readings such as the age, quality, geographical distribution and groupings of manuscripts), and they were consistent with and deemed sufficient for Lachmann's goal of reconstructing the *transmitted text* of the fourth century. After all, the

[3] Translation adapted from Tregelles, 'Introduction', pp. 135–6, and in Tregelles, *An Account*, p. 103; Latin text in Gregory, *Textkritik*, p. 968, or in Gregory, *Prolegomena* to Tischendorf, vol. III, p. 260.

transmitted text in a certain time frame is clearly something other than the *most likely original text*. This is apparent if one were to seek the text, for example, of the sixteenth century, which – as scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were gradually realising – varied distinctly from any original. Yet, Lachmann had taken a giant step forward towards the earliest text by backing away twelve hundred years from the 'received text' of the sixteenth century in his attempt to display that of the fourth. Bentley's stated goal had been similar: to recover the text of Origen's time, and therefore, presumably, the standard text at the time of the Council of Nicaea, though Bentley never brought his proposed edition to fruition.

Lachmann's methodological achievement should be seen from two angles. First, his recognition of two early text-types, an Eastern and a Western, but, as noted, the later *textus receptus* is also in the picture. Hence, the now common triad of texts is implied, though Lachmann neglected the *textus receptus* because it had no significance for his goal – the text of the fourth century. From our modern standpoint, however, Lachmann's dismissal of the later body of material would be overkill, for beyond doubt later manuscripts have preserved early readings a fair number of times – a point noticed by Johann Salomo Semler and Johann Albrecht Bengel in the middle part of the eighteenth century, and even another century earlier by the classicist Nicolaas Heinsius.[4] After all, the date of a manuscript is not as important as the date of its text, though more often than not, the age of a text conforms to the general age of the manuscript containing it.

Second, Lachmann's canons of criticism consisted entirely of external criteria, with major emphasis, of course, on witnesses closest to the fourth century, but also on the geographical distribution of manuscripts. Four of Lachmann's six principles concerned witnesses in various regions, and no one prior to Lachmann had paid as much attention to geographical diversity as he did:

> Above all we shall take account of the most ancient [witnesses], and among these of such ones as derive from the most widely separated places. . . . Where manuscripts from distant regions agree with one another, this is likely to have been propagated from very ancient sources into the various places.[5]

[4] Timpanaro, *Genesis*, pp. 69–70 and n.33.

[5] Timpanaro, *Genesis*, p. 85 n.8, and the longer quotation on p. 85. Lachmann even tried to defend this geographical criterion by tracing it to Jerome (but unsuccessfully): p. 86 n.9. Among Lachmann's predecessors in geographical diversity were Richard Bentley and J. A. Bengel. The latter, in rudimentary fashion, divided manuscripts into African and Asiatic (which was also a division by age): pp. 85–8, 66 n.20. Bentley stated his position as follows:

> 'Tis a good Providence and a great Blessing, That so many Manuscripts of the New Testament are still amongst us; some procur'd from *Egypt*, others from *Asia*, others found in the *Western* churches. For the very Distances of Places as well as

Such factors as the age, quality and location of witnesses supporting one or another textual variant continued to be of significance. However, the lack of any attention to *internal criteria* (assessing what authors most likely wrote and what scribes most likely transcribed) is a weakness in Lachmann's edition, for techniques such as 'the harder reading is preferable' had already appeared in Erasmus's *Annotations* and in Mill's 'Prolegomena', and discussion of internal principles had evolved significantly over the succeeding century to reach a rather sophisticated level in Griesbach. Lachmann, however, actively disdained internal assessments, criticising Griesbach for employing them, because internal criteria 'by their nature almost all cancel each other out'.[6] As Sir Frederic Kenyon phrased it, Lachmann 'tied his own hands unnecessarily, by binding himself to follow the majority of his authorities, without regard to the internal probabilities of the rival readings; thinking that thus he would eliminate altogether the "personal equation"'.[7]

Only Bentley had pursued a similar course, and both he and Lachmann were intent on creating afresh a text based entirely on the most ancient witnesses. Might this antipathy to internal evidence have arisen because both Bentley and Lachmann, as classical scholars first and foremost, had demonstrated superb skill not only in editing ancient texts but especially in providing conjectures, notably when manuscripts were few? Both largely eschewed conjectures in the New Testament text because of the profusion of available witnesses, yet their methods remained closer to the 'mechanical' aspects of textual criticism than to those deemed more subjective. Since Bentley never fulfilled his goal of a printed edition, and despite Lachmann's one-sided approach, 'the fact will remain, *that the first Greek Testament, since the invention of printing, edited wholly on ancient authority, irrespective of modern traditions, is due to* Charles [*sic*!] Lachmann'.[8]

External criteria rejoin the internal

Lachmann cleared a 'path in the wilderness', but only because his predecessors had sketched out the way, and the path was by no means a highway.

> Numbers of the Books demonstrate; that there could be no Collusion, no altering nor interpolating One Copy by another, nor All by any of them (Adam Fox, *John Mill and Richard Bentley: A Study of the Textual Criticism of the New Testament 1675–1729* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1954), p. 114).

[6] Timpanaro, *Genesis*, p. 88.

[7] Kenyon, *Handbook*, p. 288. Gregory, *Canon and Text*, p. 455, comments that the materials available to Lachmann did not permit him to carry out his proposal – to provide the fourth-century text – though 'his art and his insight led him to determine a text that largely belongs to the second century, and modern criticism accepts a great many of the readings which he approved'.

[8] Tregelles, *An Account*, p. 103 (emphasis in original).

Yet its direction and destination were now clear, and the great figures to come would pave the road to our own day. No one has surpassed Lobegott Friedrich Constantin von Tischendorf[9] in the discovery and publication of important manuscripts or in the production of critical editions, which numbered eight from 1841 to 1872. His recovery of Codex Sinaiticus (א or 01) and the mysteries still surrounding it have been rehearsed often and need not occupy us here, for our concern is his use of textual witnesses to form his critical editions.

Tischendorf provided the rationale for his text in his second edition of the Greek Testament in 1849 (and in later reprints), with basic points echoing Lachmann, but stated more strongly and with greater precision:

> The text should be sought solely from ancient witnesses, and chiefly from Greek codices, but by no means neglecting the testimonies of the versions and the fathers. Thus, the whole arrangement of the text is bound by necessity to arise from the witnesses themselves . . . not from the edition of Elzevir, which is called 'received'. However, to be placed first among disagreeing witnesses are those regarded as the oldest Greek codices, i.e., written from the fourth to about the ninth century. Again, among these, those that excel in antiquity prevail in authority, and this authority increases if testimonies of the versions or fathers are added, nor is this authority surmounted by the disagreement of most or even of all the recent codices, i.e., those written from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries.[10]

This fundamental external criterion, however, was unlike Lachmann's in that Tischendorf supplemented it with internal canons:

1. Readings wholly peculiar to one or another [ancient] witness are suspect, as are readings, in a class of documents, that appear to have originated from critical, scholarly correction.
2. Excluded are readings, no matter what their attestation, that clearly or very probably have originated from a copyist's error.
3. Witnesses with passages parallel to the Old Testament, the New Testament, and especially the Synoptic Gospels, when they attest disagreements,

[9] On Tischendorf see Gregory, *Prolegomena* to Tischendorf, vol. III, pp. 1–22, 47–68, 193–202, 279–334; Gregory, *Canon and Text*, pp. 455–9; Kenyon, *Handbook*, pp. 288–91; Schaff, *Companion*, pp. 257–62; Scrivener and Miller, *Plain Introduction*, vol. II, pp. 235–8; Tregelles, *An Account*, pp. 116–31; Tregelles, 'Introduction', pp. 137–9; Vaganay, Amphoux and Heimerdinger, *Introduction*, pp. 166–7; Vincent, *History*, pp. 117–29.

[10] The Latin text of this criterion and of the five following is in Gregory, *Prolegomena* to Tischendorf, vol. III, pp. 47–8, 53–4; for examples, vol. III, pp. 54–65 (including an example from Mark on pp. 54–5); on the predominance of number 4 see vol. III, pp. 63–4 (with an

are preferable to witnesses that show agreement, for the ancients paid particular attention to parallels.

4. More probable than others is the reading that appears to have occasioned the other readings or that still contains within itself elements of the other readings. Taken broadly, this is the foremost among all rules.
5. Readings should be studiously retained that are in accord with the Greek language and style of the individual authors of the New Testament.

Tischendorf stated explicitly that, of these five, number 4 is the principal rule, and he invokes Griesbach (Canon 11) in its support – though (as noted in part 1 of this essay) Gerhard von Maestricht (hereafter Gerhard) had in 1711 already included this as his Canon XXIV.

For the first time Tischendorf's combination of a predominant external criterion (the oldest Greek manuscripts are the most authoritative) with several internal criteria directly affected an editor's printed text that had been formed afresh from ancient textual witnesses. Johann Albrecht Bengel, Johann Jacob Wettstein and Johann Jakob Griesbach had spelled out meaningful internal criteria, but their texts atop the pages were hardly affected by either their external or internal principles. Lachmann, of course, did not propound internal criteria, and therefore Tischendorf must be viewed as a pioneer in constructing a text through the interaction of the two sets of guidelines. This interplay (commonly designated the 'balance of probabilities') would become dominant in virtually all future New Testament textual criticism, and would bring welcome benefits as well as a high measure of frustration. It will be observed shortly, however, that Tischendorf's internal criteria played a relatively minor role in forming his text compared with his overriding emphasis on employing the most ancient witnesses, especially those that he had brought to light and/or published.

Tischendorf, like several before him, classified manuscripts,[11] and for him there were two pairs, an ancient class that included the 'Alexandrian' group (found among Eastern Jewish Christians, who spoke a Septuagint Greek) and the 'Latin' (i.e. manuscripts used by 'Latins' whether Latin or Greek speaking). The other, later pair was composed of the 'Asiatic' class (found among Greeks whether in Greece or Asia Minor) and the 'Byzantine'. It appears that Tischendorf did little with this grouping concept, essentially a twofold division into earlier and later manuscripts, and, in accordance with his already

example from Matthew). English translations of the criteria are in Tregelles, *An Account*, pp. 119–21, and Vincent, *History*, pp. 125–8.

[11] On Tischendorf's manuscript classification see Gregory, *Prolegomena* to Tischendorf, vol. III, pp. 193–8; Tregelles, *An Account*, pp. 126–8; Vincent, *History*, pp. 123–5.

clearly stated principles, the ancient witnesses governed his text-critical work, quite apart from any system of classification.

Assessments of Tischendorf's contributions to New Testament textual criticism will include without fail his unsurpassed manuscript finds, collations and publications, and the magnificent apparatus in his eighth major edition (1869–72) – still useful today. Increasingly, however, the text he fashioned has been considered less than significant, a conclusion often explained by Tischendorf's enthusiasm over his latest manuscript disclosure and its immediate influence on the edition then in progress – most prominently Codex Sinaiticus in his eighth edition. Overall, then, his contribution to methodology was minimal, though (as noted) he must be credited for the actual use of internal criteria in the formation of a fresh critical text. In this respect he advanced beyond Lachmann's exclusive application of external evidence, but otherwise Tischendorf is viewed as merely carrying on the Lachmann tradition, though Lachmann's apparatus, of course, in no way compared with Tischendorf's. Léon Vaganay characterised Tischendorf as 'above all, a man of learning and, so to speak, a man of the variants', adding that he 'had essentially no firm principles from which to work' and that 'he did not have a critical mind, in the true sense of critical. . . . He appeared indeed to mistrust any theory about the history of the text, preferring to rely upon his own judgement to decide between several early variants'[12] – an assessment containing both overstatement and appropriate critique. All in all, however, Tischendorf's pervasive influence upon every succeeding apparatus – both by bringing to light new manuscripts and by his own exemplary editions – may be honour enough.

A close contemporary of Tischendorf, sometimes overlooked, but whose meticulous history of the printed text has guided many, did not shrink from offering his own critical criteria and a single edition of the New Testament text (1857–72), namely, Samuel Prideaux Tregelles.[13] He deserves recognition for bringing the external and internal criteria into balance and also into full utilisation in constructing his text, and, as Léon Vaganay asserts, he should

[12] Vaganay, Amphoux and Heimerdinger, *Introduction*, p. 148; see pp. 147–9. These comments also are in Vaganay's earlier editions in varying phraseology: see Leo [*sic*!] Vaganay, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (London: Sands, 1937), pp. 166–7. His comments on Lachmann are similarly blunt (Vaganay, Amphoux and Heimerdinger, *Introduction*, pp. 146–7), but that is not to dismiss the points he makes about both scholars.

[13] See Tregelles' own writings: *An Account*, pp. 115–16 n.‡, pp. 132–274; and in Horne, *Introduction*, vol. IV, pp. 139–42, 342–55 (including illustrations). He was also an indefatigable collator of manuscripts (*An Account*, pp. 155–73). See also Gregory, *Canon and Text*, pp. 460–1; Kenyon, *Handbook*, pp. 291–3; Scrivener and Miller, *Plain Introduction*, vol. II, pp. 238–41; Vincent, *History*, pp. 130–7.

be credited also 'for leading his fellow countrymen away from the "textus receptus", just as Lachmann had done on the continent'.[14] Tregelles was a self-taught 'amateur', who, it is commonly said, was unaware of Lachmann's principles and nevertheless arrived at similar criteria himself. A close reading of his two descriptions of Lachmann, however, suggests rather that he knew Lachmann's critical canons but had arrived at his own independently and did not wish to appear as if he had simply adopted what he later discovered Lachmann had already presented.[15] Gregory made two interesting observations about this dynamic but volatile period: first, that Tregelles finished his text of the Gospels prior to the discovery of Codex Sinaiticus and when Codex Vaticanus was still not well known; and second, that Tischendorf appeared to have 'delayed his parts of the eighth edition until he could see the corresponding part of Tregelles' New Testament'.[16] Given Gregory's close affiliation with Tischendorf, his defence of and tribute to Tregelles' printed text is not to be minimised.

Tregelles' text-critical principles began with a more succinct form of Tischendorf's basic external goal, namely, 'to form a text on the authority of ancient copies, without allowing the "received text" any prescriptive right'.[17] At first imitating Lachmann's goal, Tregelles sought from these oldest manuscripts 'to present … the text commonly received in the fourth century', but immediately added that, given 'certain proofs', the text could move 'still nearer to the apostolic age'. And those 'proofs' involved ascertaining 'transcriptional error' – that is, using internal evidence,[18] as exemplified in the following supplementary statements by Tregelles that emphasise the decisive role of internal criteria whenever the early witnesses are in disagreement:

> In confining the examination to the ancient documents, all care must be taken rightly to understand their testimony, and to weigh it in all its particulars.
>
> Authorities cannot be followed mechanically; and thus, where there is a difference of reading amongst the more trustworthy witnesses, all that we know of

[14] Vaganay, Amphoux and Heimerdinger, *Introduction*, p. 149.

[15] See Tregelles, *An Account*, pp. 153–4, 173.

[16] Gregory, *Canon and Text*, pp. 460–1. See Tregelles, *An Account*, pp. 156, 172, about his frustration in attempting to collate Codex B in Rome in 1845.

[17] Tregelles, *An Account*, p. 152; see also pp. 173–4, where 'ancient copies' specifically includes the oldest versions and patristic citations; see p. 187: 'Where there is the united evidence of the oldest MSS., versions, and citations, criticism has no place, for the reading is not in question'; see also Tregelles, 'Introduction', pp. 140–1: 'The ancient MSS. should be the authorities for every word'; 'the ancient authorities should be allowed a primary place'; 'the general principle in the formation of the text is that of following [external] evidence'.

[18] Tregelles, *An Account*, p. 173.

> the nature and origin of various readings, and of the kind of errors to which copyists were liable, must be employed. But, let it be observed, that discrimination of this kind is only required when the witnesses differ; for otherwise, we should fall into the error of determining by conjecture what the text *ought* to be, instead of accepting it as it is.[19]

Here the dominant external criterion is balanced by several internal factors that may tip the scale when ancient authorities differ:

1. Favour the reading that appears to have occasioned the others.
2. Reject readings that clearly involve scribal errors, such as dittography and homoeoteleuton.
3. Prefer the reading that at first glance is incongruous but that makes good sense upon further scrutiny.
4. Reject harmonisations, (likely) marginal intrusions into the text, and dogmatic alterations.
5. Prefer the harder reading.
6. Prefer the shorter reading.

Tregelles employed 120 pages to apply these principles to New Testament texts.[20]

Finally, Tregelles thought it 'impossible to draw *definite lines of classification*' of manuscripts, though he recognised that they fall into two large families, the more ancient Alexandrian and the more recent Constantinopolitan or Byzantine witnesses. He acknowledged, however, that a Western group might be separated from the Alexandrian, revealing two 'branches of the same family', but due to their close similarities over against the Byzantine, he viewed them as 'united witnesses' for that one family.[21] So, as with Tischendorf, manuscript grouping had little effect on Tregelles except to hold together in a convenient category those early witnesses that were all important for his construction of the text.

By way of summary, Bentley, Bengel, Wettstein, Griesbach, Lachmann and Tischendorf proposed or functioned with a basic external criterion that

[19] Tregelles, *An Account*, p. 186 (emphasis in original); Tregelles, 'Introduction', p. 344 (item 6).

[20] Tregelles provides no formal list, so the criteria must be extracted from his discussions in *An Account*, respectively, (1) pp. 191–2, 222, 230; (2) pp. 194–6, 205–8, 220–1; (3) pp. 196–200, 203–4; (4) pp. 202, 206–7, 221–5 – though he says it would be 'an entire mistake to suppose that there was any evidence of doctrinal corruption of the sacred records' (p. 223), pp. 245–6; (5) pp. 202, 221–2; (6) pp. 220–1, 245–6. See his illustrations of external (pp. 132–51) and internal criteria (pp. 174–274). See also Tregelles, 'Introduction', pp. 342–5.

[21] Tregelles, 'Introduction', pp. 104–7.

was supplemented (except for Bentley and Lachmann) by subsidiary internal criteria. Of course, Bentley never completed his edition, and Bengel, Wettstein and Griesbach chose not to apply their principles to the construction of their printed texts. As for Tischendorf, he stated laudable principles, external and internal, but his text fell short of what those criteria might have produced, primarily because of his understandable bias towards the famous Codex Sinaiticus that he had brought to light and his valuation of it above its more textually consistent counterpart, Codex Vaticanus. Yet the principle of working from the most ancient witnesses had been firmly established.

It fell to Tregelles, however, to combine fully the two sets of criteria – external and internal – and to employ them consistently and thoroughly in actual practice. But, as noted, his text also suffered from the lack of a fully accurate and available collation of Codex Vaticanus, and Codex Sinaiticus had not been discovered until after he published his text of the Gospels, advantages enjoyed by Tischendorf. Then, too, frustration arose in utilising internal criteria. Tregelles affirmed that their interrelationship, involving frequent conflicts, must be adjudicated by the 'balance of probabilities' (a phrase perhaps first used by Tregelles and commonly used thereafter). The English commentator Henry Alford constructed his own Greek text and revised it until, in the sixth edition of his *Greek Testament* (1868), it was founded upon the oldest witnesses. He confessed what may at the time have been a widely held view of 'canons of subjective criticism' (as he called them), that is, internal criteria:

> In very many cases they may be made to tell with equal force either way. One critic adopts a reading because it is in accord with the usage of the sacred writer; another holds it, for this very reason, to have been a subsequent conformation of the text. One believes a particle to have been inserted to give completeness; another to have been omitted as appearing superfluous.[22]

Moreover, the matter of manuscript groupings had hardly progressed beyond their point of origin with Bengel. His two groups were essentially three, since the early one was subdivided into two, succeeded by a later group. Semler adopted this view, as did Griesbach, though finally the latter felt that the

[22] Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament, with a Critically Revised text*, 4 vols. (London: Rivingtons; Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, 1871–7; vol. I, 7th edn. 1874), vol. I, pp. 87–8. See Schaff, *Companion*, pp. 267–8; Vincent, *History*, p. 138. Thomas Rawson Birks, *Essay on the Right Estimation of Manuscript Evidence in the Text of the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1878), p. 47, held a similar view, and even Westcott and Hort could say that internal evidence's 'inherent precariousness remains undiminished' (Westcott and Hort, *New Testament*, vol. II, p. 34).

distinction between the two early groups could not be sustained. The classification schemes of Lachmann and Tischendorf were similar in form, though Tregelles reverted to the twofold grouping of Griesbach, and for the same reason. Designations of 'Alexandrian' and 'Western' for the two early groups, and 'Constantinopolitan' or 'Byzantine' for the later one, were becoming common, but a compelling explanation of these textual clusters (later to be designated 'text-types') and their interrelationship with internal evidence were awaiting formulation.

The synergism of external and internal criteria

Westcott–Hort and beyond

Three hundred and thirty years after Stephanus's critical edition (1550) and 170 years after Gerhard's critical canons (1711), the time was right for two English scholars to produce a Greek New Testament fully utilising the hard-won priority of the oldest witnesses and readings (180 degrees from Stephanus) and also fully integrating the now fewer accredited internal principles (in contrast to Gerhard's forty-three). In the meantime some 840 editions of the Greek Testament had been published, though only some thirty-five were of significance. *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, by Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort,[23] appeared in 1881, with no critical apparatus, but it was followed by a volume in 1882 subtitled *Introduction, Appendix*, including 180 pages of notes on readings. This second volume was written by Hort with the full agreement of Westcott. They offered no formal list of criteria, although, like Tregelles, several external and internal principles can be drawn from their extended discussions.

At the outset, Westcott and Hort specified that 'No rule of precedence has been adopted; but documentary attestation has been in most cases allowed to confer the place of honour as against internal evidence', followed later by their fundamental external criterion for sorting variant readings, namely, 'a consistent application of the principle that KNOWLEDGE OF DOCUMENTS SHOULD PRECEDE FINAL JUDGEMENT UPON READINGS'.[24] Yet they first discussed

[23] For a summary and critique of Westcott and Hort's views see Birdsall, 'Recent History'; Epp, 'The Eclectic Method', pp. 234–42; reprinted, with added notes in Epp, *Perspectives*, pp. 149–57; Jacquier, *Nouveau Testament*, pp. 450–63; Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, pp. 174–83; Schaff, *Companion*, pp. 268–82; Scrivener and Miller, *Plain Introduction*, vol. II, pp. 242–3, 287–97; Vaganay, Amphoux and Heimerdinger, *Introduction*, pp. 149–54; Vincent, *History*, pp. 145–54.

[24] Westcott and Hort, *New Testament*, quotations, respectively, vol. II, pp. 17, 31 (emphasis in original). Note also vol. II, p. 72, where they speak of 'the vast increase of certainty

internal criteria, obviously because these were to play a substantive role in evaluating the manuscripts. Specifically, they utilised internal considerations to determine the quality of readings in each document – that is, readings with relatively greater 'freedom from corruption' – and the results, in turn, formed the basis for judging the overall quality of each document. In other words, manuscripts with consistently 'better' or 'best' readings, as determined by internal criteria, were designated the 'best' manuscripts or groups of manuscripts. Then this qualitative judgement of manuscripts itself became an external criterion, for Westcott–Hort asserted that generally such 'best' witnesses would lead to the original pure and uncorrupted text. Hence, for them – and considerably in contrast to their predecessors – internal criteria were indeed substantial factors in the formation of external criteria. Previous editors had focused on the dates and groupings of manuscripts (largely empirical matters), but Westcott–Hort wanted to know their quality. What emerged in their scheme was a fruitful synergy of external and internal principles: while mindful of the age of a manuscript, 'knowledge of documents' issued primarily (in their words) from Intrinsic Probability (what an author probably wrote) and Transcriptional Probability (what a scribe most probably wrote).[25] For them, the best manuscripts were those yielding original readings rather consistently. Naturally, to the extent that the quality of witnesses is determined via their readings, any mechanical objectivity in the use of documentary evidence is thereby diminished. That is, if internal criteria are determinative for certain external criteria, then, since internal considerations are by nature more subjective, any external criteria so determined have acquired increased subjectivity.

A criterion crucial in this procedure (one not found in the usual lists, though perhaps it should be included) is number 3 below: a conflated reading is later than the two readings from which it has been formed. This became a major factor in Westcott–Hort's formation of their textual groups. Briefly stated, they identified two early textual streams flowing from the autographs and doubtless existing in the second century. First was the Western text, perhaps the earliest text (basically in Codices D (05, *c*. 400) and D^p (06, sixth century), in the Old Latin and the Curetonian Syriac, and attested by second-century patristic sources). Next, with a common ancestor, came a parallel second stream that they subdivided into an Alexandrian text (somewhat mixed with the Western)

which is gained when we are able to make full use of Documentary Evidence, and thus confine Internal Evidence to the subordinate functions which alone it is normally fitted to discharge'.

[25] Westcott and Hort, *New Testament*, vol. II, pp. 19–20. See also Eldon Jay Epp, 'Textual Criticism, New Testament', *IDBSup*, pp. 891–5 at p. 892; and *ABD*, vol. VI, pp. 412–35 at pp. 429–30.

and a Neutral (that is, an uncontaminated) text (basically Codices B and ℵ). Then, beginning in the fourth century, a smoother, fuller and conflated textual form arose from the earlier texts, namely, the 'Syrian' text (but better termed the Constantinopolitan or Byzantine), consisting of Codex Alexandrinus (A or 02, fifth century) in the Gospels, plus the majority of all manuscripts, but with no support for its distinctive readings from ante-Nicene writers.[26] It has been claimed, justifiably, that a major contribution of Westcott–Hort was to grasp the value of the numerous manuscripts Tischendorf had found or collected and to utilise them in a systematic fashion – something Tischendorf had not achieved.[27]

A list of Westcott–Hort's criteria, drawn from their volume II, would look something like this:[28]

Documentary evidence (external criteria)

1. Readings in manuscripts, or groups, of early date are to be preferred (though on occasion later manuscripts preserve early texts).
2. Readings are approved or rejected by reason of the quality, and not the number, of their supporting witnesses. In manuscripts, purity of transmission is paramount.
3. Readings combining two simple, alternative readings are later than the two readings comprising the conflation, and manuscripts rarely or never supporting conflate readings are texts antecedent to mixture and are of special value.
4. Readings are to be preferred that are found in manuscripts habitually containing superior readings as determined by intrinsic and transcriptional probability. Certainty is increased if such a better manuscript is found also to be an older manuscript. The same principles apply to groups of manuscripts.

Internal Evidence: Intrinsic Probability (5) and Transcriptional Probability (6–7)

5. The reading is to be preferred that makes the best sense in terms of congruity to grammar, to the purport of the sentence and its larger context, conformity to the usual style of the author, and related factors.

[26] Westcott and Hort, *New Testament*, vol. II, pp. 49–50, 150–1. Added later, in addition to the papyri (see below), was Coptic$^{G67\ (=meg\ or\ mae)}$ for the D Textual cluster. It is significant that no papyri prior to about 500 CE carry the Byzantine text.

[27] See Vaganay, Amphoux and Heimerdinger, *Introduction*, pp. 148–9, 151.

[28] Westcott and Hort, *New Testament*, respectively: (1) vol. II, pp. 31–4, 59; see vol. II, pp. 3, 5–6; (2) vol. II, p. 44; see pp. 32–3 *et passim* on uncontaminated manuscripts; (3) vol. II, pp. 49–50; see pp. 150–1; for examples, vol. II, pp. 94–119; (4) vol. II, pp. 32–3, 150, 178, 210 *et passim* on purity of Codex B; on groups, vol. II, pp. 60–2; (5) vol. II, pp. 20–2; (6) vol. II, pp. 20, 26–9; (7) vol. II, pp. 22–3, 69.

6. The harder reading is to be preferred ('the most famous of all "canons of criticism"').
7. A reading is to be preferred that most fitly explains the existence of the others in each case.

One long-popular criterion was lacking: the 'shorter reading' is to be preferred over the longer, which, interestingly, is in dispute at present (see below).

Naturally, subsequent scholarship has altered the Westcott–Hort scheme. For instance, the term 'Western' (probably adopted due to its heavy use since Griesbach) was geographically incorrect, for that textual form included important Eastern witnesses, and the term 'Neutral', as well as the arrogant title of their edition, were very soon considered overstatements and have been abandoned. Moreover, only five papyri (none at the time thought to predate Codices א and B) were known in 1881, but since then the number has reached 128 (125 different papyri) and they have provided earlier witnesses – and, in general, vindication – for Westcott–Hort's textual groups, including the fact that no papyri dating before 500 support the Byzantine text. The array of additional early papyri and uncials, however, has led also to the conviction that a critical text cannot be formed from a single or a few manuscripts, as in the case of Westcott–Hort.

For some forty years after 1881, textual critics were occupied largely with reactions to the Westcott–Hort text and their proposed history of the text. Among the responses were the vituperative attacks by Dean John W. Burgon, who attempted to turn the Westcott–Hort view on its head by arguing that Codices Sinaiticus (א), Vaticanus (B) and Bezae (D) were '*three of the most scandalously corrupt copies extant*' [for they] 'exhibit *the most shamefully mutilated* texts which are anywhere to be met with', and he opted for the later *textus receptus*.[29] Though similar views, now employing the designation 'Majority Text', are still proposed, there are few scholarly presentations of its priority.[30]

[29] John William Burgon, *The Revision Revised* (London: John Murray, 1883), p. 16 (emphasis in original).

[30] Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad (eds.), *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1982), see pp. ix–xliv; Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont (eds.), *The New Testament in the Original Greek According to the Byzantine/Majority Textform* (Atlanta, GA: Original Word, 1991), see pp. xiii–lvii. See M. A. Robinson, 'The Case for Byzantine Priority', in David Alan Black (ed.), *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), pp. 125–39. See critiques by Gordon D. Fee, 'The Majority Text and the Original Text of the New Testament', in Epp and Fee (eds.), *Studies*, pp. 183–208; Daniel B. Wallace, 'The Majority Text Theory: History, Methods, and Critique', in Ehrman and Holmes (eds.), *Text of the New Testament*, pp. 297–320.

In this same period, though side-stepping the momentum flowing from Tischendorf through Westcott–Hort, the voluminous prolegomena and edition of the Greek text by Hermann Freiherr von Soden[31] appeared (1902–10, text 1913), with its massive compilation of variants, especially from the minuscules. He proposed that three recensions of the text were produced during its transmission, H (for Hesychius of Egypt) ≈ Alexandrian, I (for Jerusalem) ≈ Western and K (for Koine) ≈ Byzantine, with a hypothetical archetype I-H-K that had been corrupted in the second century by Marcion and Tatian. The original text would be reached by finding and removing these corruptions. Rather than employing the external and internal criteria that had become standard, von Soden employed a more mechanical system, by and large selecting readings, for example, that were found in two of the recensions (thereby improperly equating the quality of all three textual groups), or alternatively – in the Gospels – readings that differ from Tatian. His views are far more complex than this, but von Soden's edition made no significant advance in methodology for establishment of the early text – indeed, his text has greater affinity with the *textus receptus* than does any other modern critical edition, though aspects of his history of the text, including identification of numerous minuscule groups, have considerable merit.

Some enhancements of the Westcott–Hort scheme were proposed, including the existence of a Caesarean text, which was initiated by Burnett Hillman Streeter as part of his 'Theory of Local Texts' (1924),[32] which, in turn, purported to identify forms of text employed in the major centres of early Christianity: Alexandria, Antioch, Caesarea, Italy and Gaul, and Carthage. He placed the major manuscripts, versions and patristic citations (as known at the time) in these various geographically defined texts. An external criterion for the priority of readings emerged when Streeter asserted that evaluation of a reading should involve 'primarily, not the number or age of the MSS. which support it, but the number and geographical distribution of the ancient

[31] Hermann Freiherr von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt hergestellt auf Grund ihrer Textgeschichte*, 2 parts in 4 vols. (2nd unchanged edn. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1911 (*Untersuchungen*, part 1 in vols. I–III), 1913 (*Text*, part 2 in vol. IV)), vol. IV: *Text*. See useful summaries and critiques by Jacquier, *Nouveau Testament*, pp. 499–527; Kenyon, *Handbook*, pp. 363–9; Frederic G. Kenyon, *The Text of the Greek Bible: A Student's Handbook*, new edn. (London: Duckworth, 1949), pp. 179–86; Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, pp. 185–9; Alexander Souter, *The Text and Canon of the New Testament*, rev. edn. by C. S. C. Williams (London: Duckworth, 1954), pp. 118–24; Vaganay, Amphoux and Heimerdinger, *Introduction*, pp. 155–9.

[32] Streeter, *Four Gospels*, pp. 26–108. Description and critique in Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, pp. 214–18; Vincent Taylor, *The Text of the New Testament: A Short Introduction*, 2nd edn. (London: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 57–75; see also Birdsall, 'Recent History', pp. 149–53.

local texts in which it can be traced', and the result would be a text whose freedom 'from serious modification or interpolation is guaranteed by the concurrence of different lines of ancient and independent evidence'.[33] Streeter's theory appeared to be promising in terms of validating early readings, but the Caesarean text disintegrated upon further analysis. Then, too, the geographical location of Streeter's other texts, except for the Alexandrian, could not be sustained and have not found acceptance currently, partly because of newly discovered witnesses. To the extent, however, that individual manuscripts can be located geographically, widespread distribution of a reading might well be construed in that reading's favour.

Manuscript groupings reached a point of solidity with the basic schema of Westcott–Hort (to which the Caesarean text had been added), except that their 'Neutral' and 'Alexandrian' textual groups were combined and usually designated 'Alexandrian'. Naturally, the rapidly appearing papyri had to be incorporated into Westcott–Hort's basic formulation, and this was accomplished without major disruption. For example, 𝔓[75], 𝔓[66], 𝔓[45] (Acts only), 𝔓[46] and 𝔓[72] fit rather easily into the Alexandrian or B-Text, while 𝔓[38], 𝔓[48] and 𝔓[69] found a place in the so-called 'Western' or D-Text. All of these papyri date from around 200 to 300 CE. 𝔓[45] in the Gospels had been assigned to the Caesarean text, but that 'text-type' (a term that now entered scholarly discussion – see below), as noted, had disintegrated, and by 1981 it could be said that the 'pre-Caesarean' witnesses, namely 𝔓[45] in the Gospels and Codex Washingtonianus (W or 032, fifth century) in Mark 5:31–16:20 were neither pre-Caesarean nor Caesarean, while Codex Koridethi (Θ or 038, ninth century) does not have a text distinctive enough to deserve a classification separate from the remaining text-types. Yet, the portions of 𝔓[45] and W noted above are textually related and stand together as an early, abortive textual stream, while Θ, plus Families 1 and 13, represent a later genetically connected group, separate from 𝔓[45]–W. These latter two groups, in their respective time frames, form two midway texts (between the B- and D-Texts) and might be designated the C-Text (though 'C' no longer stands for 'Caesarean).[34] The remaining portions of 𝔓[45] and W were placed, appropriately, in the A-, B-, or D-Text.

[33] Streeter, *Four Gospels*, pp. 78 and 148.

[34] On the Caesarean text see Hurtado, *Text-Critical Methodology*, *passim*, esp. pp. 88–9; Eldon Jay Epp, 'The Twentieth Century Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism', *JBL* 93 (1974), pp. 393–6; reprinted in Epp, *Perspectives*, pp. 69–73. That the Caesarean text, at least as earlier described, did not and does not exist, is evident from the two editions of Metzger, *Textual commentary*. The first edition (1971), pp. xxviii–xxxi, lists witnesses to the four text-types, including the Caesarean, but the second edition (1994), pp. 14*–16*, lists only the Alexandrian, Western, and Byzantine, but no longer the Caesarean text. See the same list in Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, pp. 276–80.

The result, currently accepted by most textual critics (though with varying terminology), consists of two early, mainline and parallel textual streams (the B-Text or Alexandrian and the D-Text or 'Western' – though not in the geographical sense), accompanied by the midway C-Text (though not comparable in strength to the preceding two), followed by a later A-Text or Byzantine stream, which emerged over time as the earlier streams coalesced into a later, full text, variously designated the *textus receptus*, or the Byzantine, Constantinopolitan, Koine, Ecclesiastical, or Majority text.

Newly refined methods appeared in the 1960s to measure relationships *quantitatively* between and among manuscripts and text-types. Much earlier a scholar might collate two manuscripts against the same standard, usually the *textus receptus*, and if both showed a 20 per cent departure from the standard employed, it might be claimed that they were related textually to one another, even if the variants from the standard were different in the two manuscripts. Though this is a simplistic example, more sophisticated methods also led to the realisation that convincing conclusions would be reached only if the texts of major manuscripts extant for a given writing or section of that writing were tested for their total variation – their total agreement/disagreement with one another. If, for example, the major manuscripts attesting a chapter in the Gospel of John were collated against a standard (again, e.g., the *textus receptus*) and a hundred variation units (points of variation – both agreements and disagreements) were discovered among them, a table showing the number and percentage of agreements of each manuscript with each of the others would emerge. If two manuscripts shared eighty variant readings with one another (out of the 100), those manuscripts, of course, would have an 80 per cent rate of agreement.

To cite an actual example, among ten early papyri and major majuscules in John 1–8 (with 320 variation units), 𝔓⁷⁵ shows an 81 per cent agreement with Codex B, 56.2 per cent with Codex A, 56.5 per cent with the *textus receptus* (TR), but only 22.9 per cent agreement with Codex D. In addition, B agrees 57.6 per cent with A, 52.5 per cent with TR, but only 22.9 per cent with D. And A agrees 56.2 per cent with 𝔓⁷⁵, 38.3 per cent with D, but 80.1 per cent with TR. Curiously, Codex א in these eight chapters, while agreeing with 𝔓⁷⁵ and A 25.5 per cent, with B 26.6 per cent and with TR 35 per cent, agrees with D 54.1 per cent. However, in John 9 (with 51 variation units), א agrees with both 𝔓⁷⁵ and B 62.7 per cent, but with A 31.4 per cent, with D 35.3 per cent and with TR 33.3 per cent. Clearly something has happened in א between John 1–8 and John 9 – a switch of textual character away from that in D. This example illustrates not only the value of careful quantitative measurement, but also demonstrates the phenomenon of 'block mixture' in א, that is, places where a scribe obviously has moved from copying one exemplar to another

of differing character, creating mixed textual characteristics in the resulting manuscript.[35]

Similar quantitative guidelines were developed for text-types, notably by Ernest C. Colwell, who defined a text-type as 'a group of manuscripts that agree more than 70 percent of the time and is separated by a gap of about 10 percent from its neighbors'.[36] Kurt and Barbara Aland, contrary to Westcott and Hort and most textual critics to the present time, did not acknowledge the existence of any text-types prior to 400. For the following period they recognised only the Alexandrian/Egyptian and the Koine/Byzantine text-types, but not a D-text-type. How early the roots of the B- and D-texts are remains an issue, as does the extent to which various manuscripts can be identified clearly as members of one text-type or another, a problem particularly with fragmentary papyri. To be sure, terminological controversy has also surrounded the designation 'text-type', which has been called into question as too rigid to describe accurately the various textual groups, both with respect to their internal cohesion (or the lack thereof) and differentiation from one another. Alternatively, therefore, 'textual cluster' or 'textual constellation' has been proposed. To 'constellate' is 'to unite in a cluster'. A constellation consists of several prominent stars that appear to present a pattern, surrounded by stars increasingly further removed from that centre, until, on the margins, they overlap with the marginal stars of an adjacent constellation, which, in turn, has its own bright stars at its centre. This very well describes what have long been called text-types.[37] Many contemporary textual critics, however, appear to be favouring the term 'textual cluster' rather than 'text-type'.[38]

[35] Full data and discussion in Gordon D. Fee, 'Codex Sinaiticus in the Gospel of John: A Contribution to Methodology in Establishing Manuscript Relationships', *NTS* 15 (1968/69), pp. 23–44; reprinted in Epp and Fee (eds.), *Studies*, pp. 221–43; for similar studies in Mark see Hurtado, *Text-Critical Methodology*, *passim*; see also Epp, *Perspectives*, pp. 70–3, 87–92, 263 n.145.

[36] Ernest Cadman Colwell (with Ernest W. Tune), 'The Quantitative Relationships between MS. Text-types', in J. N. Birdsall and R. W. Thomson (eds.), *Biblical and Patristic Studies in Memory of Robert Pierce Casey* (Freiburg, Basel and New York: Herder, 1963), pp. 25–32 at p. 29; reprinted as 'Method in Establishing Quantitative Relationships between Text-Types of New Testament Manuscripts', in Colwell, *Studies in Methodology*, pp. 56–62 at p. 59. Cf. the critique of Colwell's formula and other aspects of his method by Klaus Wachtel, 'Colwell Revisited: Grouping New Testament Manuscripts', in C.-B. Amphoux and J. K. Elliott (eds.), *The New Testament Text in Early Christianity: Proceedings of the Lille Colloquium, July 2000*, HTB 6 (Lausanne: Zèbre), pp. 31–43; see a response in Epp, 'Textual Clusters', pp. 544–9.

[37] Aland and Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, pp. 50–67: the D or 'Western' text is a 'phantom' (55), contrary to the predominant view that it exists and has early roots in 𝔓[48], 𝔓[69], 𝔓[38], 0171. See Epp, *Perspectives*, pp. 65–77, 359–81, 431–4, 490–2, 660–5, 727–30.

[38] Epp, 'Textual Clusters'.

A new tool, 'The Coherence-Based Genealogical Method',[39] developed by Gerd Mink in Münster, is currently being refined for assessing relationships among the texts (more precisely, among the 'states' of the text) in all of our extant New Testament manuscripts by a highly sophisticated computer program that, by employing the present array of external and internal criteria, constructs a local stemma for each place of variation. The goal of each local stemma is to isolate the 'prior variant' (or 'source variant') – that which best explains all other variants in the unit – and then to form a global stemma from the totality of local stemmata. The global stemma results from determining the extent to which manuscript texts agree in reading each source witness throughout all variation units. That is, texts with more prior readings (and fewer posterior readings) become potential ancestors of those with fewer – which are descendants. The broad outcome is a representation of the 'textual flow' in the transmission of the New Testament text. This method holds much promise, though – at least in its current phase – certain limitations remain or remain to be remedied: beyond its accommodation of continuous Greek manuscripts, there are limits on the use of fragmentary texts (though an option exists for doing so); on the use of corrections to manuscripts (especially in marginal text or commentaries); on the use of versions and patristic citations unless 'they, certainly or presumably, rest upon a Greek exemplar in a now lost Greek text witness' (though some broader trials have been attempted); and on the use of lectionaries (because they are not continuous texts). The method has evolved during its application to the Catholic Epistles (the only publications of the *Editio critica maior* to date), but now, in its more mature form, it will be applied to the Book of Acts, the Gospel of John and other portions of the New Testament. Naturally, textual critics will follow its development and results with great interest.[40]

On another front, sorting out the myriad variants, it is fair to say that during the several decades following Tischendorf, Tregelles and Westcott–Hort, the

[39] Gerd Mink, 'Contamination, Coherence, and Coincidence in Textual Transmission: The Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM) as a Complement and Corrective to Existing Approaches', in Klaus Wachtel and Michael W. Holmes (eds.), *The Textual History of the Greek New Testament: Changing Views in Contemporary Research*, SBL Text-Critical Studies 8 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), pp. 141–216; Mink, 'Problems'. See the Münster Institute's website, www.uni-muenster.de/NTTextforschung/, for further descriptive materials: 'The coherence-based genealogical method – what is it about?'; 'Guide to "genealogical queries"'; and the extensive 'The coherence-based genealogical method (CBGM) – introductory presentation'. For updates, http://intf.uni-muenster.de/cbgm/en.html. See also Parker, *Introduction*, pp. 169–71.

[40] On these possible limitations see Mink, 'Problems', pp. 18–22, 78 (with notes 14–16, 18, 22); and his 'Guide to "Genealogical Queries"', 3, 12, at the Münster Institute website (see preceding note).

criteria for the priority of readings reached a stage of maturity, as implied by the two lists in the *Textual Commentary* to the UBS *Greek New Testament*.[41] Casting a broader net, it is appropriate to offer another list here, and then to complete this lengthy survey by consideration of the important methods that have issued from them.

A contemporary list of criteria for the priority of readings

The following descriptive list contains frequent qualifications of and limitations to the various criteria, and often some will be in conflict with others when applied to a given case. Hence, 'criterion' must be understood not as a 'canon' or 'rule' – something fixed – but as a standard or test *by which something can be judged*, a measure of value. In a text-critical context, the closest synonym would be 'probability', as in Tregelles' phrase 'the balance of probabilities', or in Westcott–Hort's division of their approach into 'Intrinsic Probabilities' and 'Transcriptional Probabilities' (headings also employed in the UBS *GNT Textual Commentary*). Thus, external and internal criteria could be termed 'external probabilities' and 'internal probabilities', for in a variation unit each variant must be tested to determine its *probability* of being prior or preferable to every other variant. And an editor or critic must employ all applicable criteria, place the results on a balance scale, and move towards a decision in the direction that the scale tips. All credible criteria – all probabilities – are 'on the table' as the textual critic is at work. Indeed, it might be said, at the risk of inducing scepticism, that the final question actually is, 'Which probability is more probable?' Rather than scepticism, however, this is how the adjudication of each set of variants works, this is how external and internal criteria function, and textual critics view the process positively in that it affords an opportunity to assess fully a variation unit and to arrive at a decision about the priority of its readings, a process leading eventually to the construction of the earliest attainable text.[42]

Each of the sixteen criteria in the chart below is followed by a rationale, and often by qualifications (in parentheses).

[41] Metzger, *Textual Commentary* (2nd edn.), pp. 11*–14*; see also Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, pp. 302–4.

[42] More detail on these criteria is offered in Epp, 'Traditional "Canons" of New Testament Textual Criticism', pp. 88–126; on terminology, pp. 88–91, and in E. J. Epp, 'Textual Criticism and New Testament Interpretation', in Andrew B. McGowan and Kent Harold Richards (eds.), *Method and Meaning: Essays on New Testament Interpretation in Honor of Harold W. Attridge*, SBL Resources for Biblical Study 67 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), pp. 79–105.

Criteria / Probabilities for the Priority of Readings

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE *assesses factors such as the age, quality, geographical distribution and groupings of manuscripts and other witnesses.*

INTERNAL EVIDENCE *assesses what authors were most likely to write and what scribes and readers were likely to transcribe.*

A. The Pre-eminent Criterion / Probability: Local Genealogical Priority

This pre-eminent criterion is stated as a question. If, when applied to a given textual variant within a variation unit, the answer to the question is 'yes', that variant has a highly increased probability of belonging to the earliest attainable text.

1. **Can the variant account for the origin, development, or presence of all other readings in its variation unit?** (This is an internal criterion (see below) but is listed separately as pre-eminent.)

   Rationale: Such a variant logically must have preceded all others that can be shown to have evolved from it. (Kurt Aland called this the 'local genealogical method'. It is considered by most to be the pre-eminent criterion, and all other criteria, external and internal, may be considered its subsidiaries.)

B. Criteria / Probabilities related to External Evidence

Each criterion is stated as a question. If, when applied to a given textual variant within a variation unit, the answer to the question is 'yes', that variant has increased probability of belonging to the earliest attainable text.

2. **Is the variant supported by the earliest manuscripts, patristic citations, or versions, or by manuscripts (or other witnesses) assuredly preserving early texts?**

   Rationale: Historians of the text conclude that ancient manuscripts are less likely to have been subject to conflation, conformity to ecclesiastical texts or traditions and other scribal or readers' alterations. (A difficulty, of course, is that scribal alterations intrude from the earliest time.)

3. **Is the variant supported by the 'best quality' manuscripts (or other witnesses)?**

   Rationale: Manuscripts evidencing careful copying and transmission are less likely to have been subject to textual corruption or contamination, and manuscripts that frequently and consistently offer readings accredited as the earliest attainable text thereby acquire a reputation of general high quality. (Note, however, that internal criteria are utilised heavily to reach the conclusion that certain manuscripts are consistently 'best'. Naturally, all manuscripts are open to scribal and readers' alterations.)

4. **Is the variant supported by manuscripts (or other witnesses) with wide geographical distribution?**

   Rationale: Readings attested in more than one locality are less likely to be accidental or idiosyncratic. (However, the provenance of relatively few manuscripts is certain, though the general locale of versions and patristic citations is more frequently known. A difficulty is determining whether witnesses from different locales represent genuinely separate traditions.)

5. **Is the variant supported by one or more established *groups* of manuscripts (or other witnesses) of recognised antiquity, character and perhaps location, that is, of recognised 'best quality'?**

   Rationale: Not only individual manuscripts (and other witnesses), but families and textual clusters can be judged as to age, quality and (sometimes) location. (Again, internal criteria contribute to these judgements.)

6. **Does the variant have multiple attestation, that is, is it supported by two or more of the preceding or following criteria?**

   Rational: Multiple support by the earliest witnesses or groups of witnesses, by witnesses shown to be most reliable in quality, or most diverse in location and/or by multiple internal criteria offers cumulative weight in decision making.

C. Criteria/Probabilities related to Internal Evidence

Each criterion is stated as a question. If, when applied to a given textual variant within a variation unit, the answer to the question is 'yes', that variant has increased probability of belonging to the earliest attainable text.

⏏ **Can the variant account for the origin, development, or presence of all other readings in its variation unit?**

⏏ See the pre-eminent criterion, number 1, above. Since it is an internal consideration, it is repeated here, though not numbered again.

7. **Is the variant the harder/hardest (i.e. the more difficult/most difficult) reading in its variation unit?**

   Rationale: Scribes and readers tend to smooth or otherwise remedy rough or difficult readings, rather than create them. (Obvious scribal errors and nonsense readings do not qualify.)

8. **Is the variant – depending on circumstances – the shorter/shortest reading *or* is it the longer/longest in its variation unit?**

   Rationale: (a) Scribes and readers tend to shorten readings by omission due to parablepsis, especially as a result of homoeoteleuton, in which case the longer reading is preferable. But (b) scribes and readers also tend to add material through clarification, interpretation, harmonisation and grammatical or stylistic

improvement, in which case the shorter reading is preferable. In all cases, both readings must be tested also by the other criteria. (*This criterion is currently being debated, but the compromise formulation given here accommodates the range of known textual phenomena, which were recognised by Griesbach.*)

9. Does the variant conform to the author's recognisable style and vocabulary?

Rationale: The earliest reading is likely to follow the author's style as observed in the bulk of the writing. (To the contrary, scribes and readers may conform aberrant stylistic features to the dominant style in a writing, thus changing what would have been a 'harder' reading into a smoother reading. Or, scribes and readers may conform an author's style to that prevailing in their own time.)

10. Does the variant conform to the author's recognised theology or ideology?

Rationale: The earliest reading is likely to display the same convictions or beliefs found in the bulk of the work. (To the contrary, scribes or readers may conform apparently aberrant theological statements to an author's theology – as perceived by that scribe or reader – thus changing what would have been a 'harder' reading into a smoother reading. Or, scribes and readers may conform an author's theology to that prevailing in their own time. See criterion 16 below.)

11. Does the variant conform to Semitic forms of expression?

Rationale: New Testament authors, being either Jewish or familiar with Septuagint / Greek Old Testament style, are likely to reflect such Semitic expressions in their writings. (To the contrary, scribes and readers could also conform extraneous readings to Semitic forms.)

12. Does the variant – depending on circumstances – conform to Koine rather than Attic Greek, or vice versa?

Rationale: (a) Scribes and readers were thought to show a tendency to shape the text being copied to the more elegant Attic Greek style. But (b) scribes and readers also may tend to alter Attic words and phrases to the more contemporary and popular Koine. (*This criterion is currently being debated, but the compromise formulation given here accommodates the range of known textual phenomena.*)

13. Does the variant *not* conform to parallel passages or to extraneous items in the context generally?

Rationale: Scribes and readers tend, consciously or unconsciously, to shape the text being copied (or read) to familiar parallel passages, especially in the Synoptic Gospels, or to words or phrases just copied (or read).

14. Does the variant *not* conform to Old Testament passages?

Rationale: Scribes and readers, who were likely to be familiar with the Jewish Bible, tend to shape their copying to the content of familiar passages, as in the preceding criterion.

15. Does the variant *not* conform to liturgical forms and usages?

Rationale: Scribes and readers tend to shape the text being copied to phraseology of familiar liturgical expressions used in devotion and worship.

16. Does the variant *not* conform to extrinsic theological, ideological, or other socio-historical contexts contemporary with and congenial to a text's scribe or reader?

Rationale: Scribes and readers unconsciously, but more likely consciously, could bring a text into conformity with their own or their group's doctrinal beliefs or with accepted socio-cultural conventions. (Naturally, difficulties exist in identifying both the contemporary context and the copyist and reader's time frame and provenance.)

Criteria subject to debate

Two criteria are noted above as currently debated: number 8, concerning the shorter/longer reading, and number 12, the Atticising reading. That the shorter reading is preferable was advocated by Wettstein, and it became the first canon for Griesbach, who asserted that 'the shorter reading ... is to be preferred to the more verbose, for scribes were much more prone to add than to omit',[43] a frequently quoted affirmation ever since. He qualified the criterion carefully and at length, however, noting not only instances where the shorter reading had priority, but also where the longer reading was to be followed. His qualifications can be summarised as follows:

The shorter reading was to be preferred (a) if it was also a 'more difficult, more obscure, ambiguous, elliptical, hebraizing, or solecistic' reading, (b) if the same matter was expressed differently in various manuscripts, (c) if the word order was inconsistent and unstable, (d) if a short reading began a pericope, or (e) if the longer reading evidenced a gloss or interpretation, or agreed with the wording of parallel passages, or appeared to have come from a lectionary. The longer reading, however, was to be preferred to the shorter (unless the latter was supported by many notable witnesses) (1) if the omission from the longer reading (a) could be attributed to homoeoteleuton, (b) would have appeared to scribes as obscure, rough, superfluous, unusual, paradoxical, offensive to pious ears, erroneous, or inconsistent with parallels, or (c) did not, by its omission, damage the sense or word structure, or (2) if the shorter

[43] Johann Jakob Griesbach, *Novum testamentum graece: textum ad fidem codicum versionum et patrum*, 2 vols., 2nd edn. (Halle: Haeredes and London: Elmsly, 1796–1806), vol. 1, p. lx = 'Prolegomena', §III (reprinted in later editions). The canon consisted of 212 words in Latin. My translation is largely from Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, pp. 166–7.

reading (a) was less in accord with the author's character, style, or goal, (b) absolutely made no sense, or (c) might be an intrusion from parallel passages or lectionaries.

It is clear from these qualifying statements that other criteria have entered the picture, such as preference for the harder reading or for a reading in accord with the author's style. Observe, too, that harmonisation was listed on both sides of the issue – it could lead either to addition or to omission. These qualifications and exceptions (far more than in any other criterion) indicated that the shorter reading criterion was highly complex and ambiguous, though, incidentally, they also illustrated how all the criteria function – through a balancing of probabilities. In Griesbach's formulation, therefore, this criterion already had been characterised not merely as the 'shorter reading criterion' but as a guideline for judging both 'shorter' and 'longer' readings.

In 1965 Ernest C. Colwell, by assessing the singular readings in 𝔓45, 𝔓66 and 𝔓75, concluded that these scribes omitted material more often than adding it.[44] (Singular readings are readings not found, to date, in any other Greek manuscript.) James Royse, in a massive study, added 𝔓46, 𝔓47 and 𝔓72, refined the methodology, and, again studying singular readings, came to the same conclusion: the scribes of these six early and extensive papyri 'omit more often than they add', suggesting that the longer reading has priority and calling upon textual critics to adopt an alternate criterion: 'Other things being equal, one should prefer the longer reading.' Royse then proposed wording for a new criterion:

In general the longer reading is to be preferred, except where:

(a) the longer reading appears, on external grounds, to be late; or
(b) the longer reading may have arisen from harmonisation to the immediate context, to parallels or to general usage; or
(c) the longer reading may have arisen from an attempt at grammatical improvement.

The frequency of omissions by scribal leaps and of omissions of certain inessential words such as pronouns must be kept in mind, and when such omissions may have occurred the longer reading should be viewed as even more likely.[45]

[44] Ernest Cadman Colwell, 'Scribal Habits in Early Papyri: A Study in the Corruption of the Text', in J. Philip Hyatt (ed.), *The Bible in Modern Scholarship: Papers Read at the 100th Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, December 28–30, 1964* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1965), pp. 370–89; reprinted as 'Method in Evaluating Scribal Habits: A Study of 𝔓45, 𝔓66, 𝔓75', in Colwell, *Studies in Methodology*, pp. 106–24.

[45] James R. Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents 36 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 246, 735. See references to further

The focus on singular readings had the advantage of treating the least contaminated data since it concentrated on a scribe's own foibles, so that previously existing scribal errors in the manuscript being copied were not factors in the analysis. Yet, the question arises, is it adequate to restrict these studies to singular readings? Moisés Silva, in two brief studies – admittedly a small sample – assessed omission/addition in non-singular readings in 𝔓[46], ℵ, B and A in Galatians and Philippians, concluding, at first, that the results aligned with those of Royse. Then, however, as a linguist, Silva asked whether these variants were due to homoeoteleuton, whether they were very brief (i.e. single words or short phrases), whether they were 'function words' (conjunctions, articles, prepositions, or pronouns) and, if so, whether they affected the sense of the passage. When he focused on non-function words, the result was that additions equalled or exceeded omissions in all the tested manuscripts except 𝔓[46] (well known as copied by a careless scribe), and he concluded: 'It appears that when we deal with what some grammarians call "full words" – as opposed to those "empty words" that function primarily as grammatical markers – scribes were indeed more likely to add than to omit.'[46]

In summary, Royse's results concerning singular readings appear to be solid, based on extensive evidence and analysis, but testing the tendencies in other omission/addition variants may require further study.

Perhaps, therefore, at least for now, this criterion should not be dropped or replaced, but, akin to Griesbach, retained as twofold – as the 'criterion of the shorter/longer reading'. Moreover, it should be inclusive, first by stating the conditions (noted earlier) under which the shorter reading should be preferred, and then specifying when the longer should be preferred. After all, examination of Griesbach's canon suggests that he has been misrepresented by the overly simple designation 'the shorter reading criterion' when in reality it was, already for him, 'the shorter/longer reading criterion'. Such a compromise would meet the facts as now known – that the shorter reading is to be preferred in certain circumstances and the longer in other situations. This formulation should satisfy most critics, for several qualifications and exceptions

studies with the same result by Peter Head (p. 720 n.63) and Juan Hernandez (pp. 730–2). Elliott, on other grounds, affirmed the same 'maxim': 'Can we Recover the Original Text?', p. 33; see also pp. 39–40. For a critique of Royse see Dirk Jongkind, *Scribal Habits of Codex Sinaiticus*, Texts and Studies, Third Series, vol. 5 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2007), pp. 134–43, esp. p. 139.

[46] Moisés Silva, 'Internal Evidence in the Text-Critical Use of the LXX', in N. Fernández Marcos (ed.), *La Septuaginta en la investigación contemporánea (V Congreso de la IOSCS)* (Madrid: Instituto Arias Montano, 1985), pp. 154–64, esp. p. 159; on his 'small sample' see M. Silva, 'The Text of Galatians: Evidence from the Earliest Greek Manuscripts', in David

have accompanied this complex criterion for more than two centuries, and it may be time simply to spell it out in a comprehensive fashion and not as an either/or.

The Atticising criterion (number 12), suggested in 1963 by George D. Kilpatrick, claims that scribes in the second century tended to alter Koine Greek towards Attic Greek grammar and style, and therefore a reading showing Atticist tendencies should be considered secondary. Critics countered that it was difficult to assess Atticism before 400 CE[47] and that, on the contrary, the scribal tendency may have been to alter Attic Greek to biblical (Septuagint) Greek.[48] Over against these objections, Keith Elliott, however, asserted that surviving grammars and style manuals (notably those of Phrynichus and Moeris) demonstrate that Hellenistic Greek returned to classical standards by the first century, and he has maintained the criterion's validity: 'I would accept as original a variant that conforms to our known standard of first century Hellenistic Greek against a variant that conforms to later literary and linguistic standards.'[49] In 2004 Chrys Caragounis problematised the issue by analysing New Testament usage of Attic forms and their non-Attic (Koine) counterparts – those rejected by the two Attic grammarians noted above, concluding that:

> The part played by Atticism is a much larger question than merely looking for a reading that exhibits a more acknowledged Greek style over against a more Koine one and choosing always the Koine form. . . . The possibility, too, must be considered, that the author wrote down the Attic form and that a scribe altered it to the popular form to bring it in line with popular feeling.[50]

Alan Black (ed.), *Scribes and Scripture: New Testament Essays in Honor of J. Harold Greenlee* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), pp 17–25 at pp. 23–4; cf. Royse's response, *Scribal Habits*, pp. 258 n.328, 276 n.451, 710 n.19, 725–7.

[47] Carlo M. Martini, 'Eclecticism and Atticism in the Textual Criticism of the Greek New Testament', in Matthew Black and William A. Smalley (eds.), *On Language, Culture and Religion: In Honor of Eugene A. Nida*, Approaches to Semiotics 56 (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), pp. 151–5.

[48] Gordon D. Fee, 'Rigorous or Reasoned Eclecticism – Which?', in J. Keith Elliott (ed.), *Studies in New Testament Language and Text: Essays in Honour of George D. Kilpatrick on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, NovTSup 44 (Leiden: Brill, 1976), pp. 174–97; reprinted in Epp and Fee (eds.), *Studies*, pp. 124–40.

[49] Elliott, 'Can we Recover the Original Text?', pp. 30–3, 39. See also Elliott, 'The Atticist Grammarians', in his *Essays and Studies*, pp. 65–77.

[50] Chrys Caragounis, *The Development of Greek and the New Testament: Morphology, Syntax, Phonology, and Textual Transmission*, WUNT 167 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), p. 480 n.39; for his analysis of Attic/non-Attic words see pp. 124–40; summary on pp. 570–1.

Then, in 2009, Timo Flink examined 373 cases of variation in the New Testament where both the Koine and Attic forms of the same word(s) occurred, arguing that at times scribes 'acted like Atticist correctors' (replacing Koine readings with their Attic equivalents), while at other times scribes replaced Attic forms with those found in the more contemporary Koine. This being the case, he concluded that 'an internal criterion that favours the Koine over the Attic . . . is too simplistic', and that textual critics must await further evidence on Greek usage.[51]

Therefore, at least for now, the Atticism criterion should be treated in a manner similar to the shorter/longer reading criterion (number 8 above), for the Atticism phenomenon is not an either/or situation. Rather, scribes and readers could and did move in both directions, and decisions must be made case by case. Though hardly satisfactory, the compromise statement of the criterion (above) will at least keep the Atticism issue in view, although textual criticism may have to live and work with a fair measure of ambiguity as scholarship proceeds.

Further critiques and testing of all the criteria are to be welcomed, for the degree of complexity in these issues remains comparable to the length of time over which they have been discussed systematically – three centuries!

Eclectic methods in current New Testament textual criticism

The eclectic method, more or less as described above, is all but universal in the discipline, and there are two distinct varieties: Reasoned Eclecticism and Thoroughgoing Eclecticism. The former is practised by virtually all textual critics today, while the latter is employed by a few, though they have high visibility and influence.

Reasoned Eclecticism has a history that began with the first discussions of 'canons of criticism', accompanied by refinements along the way. It can be described rather simply, though its practice is far more complex, for it employs all the criteria in the chart above to the extent that each is applicable to an individual case. Normally the external criteria will be applied first, and on occasion the external evidence for one reading in comparison with another

[51] Timo Flink, *Textual Dilemma: Studies in the Second-Century Text of the New Testament*, University of Joensuu Publications in Theology 21 (Joensuu, Finland: University of Joensuu, 2009), pp. 129, 213.

may seem sufficient for a decision. Internal criteria, however, also need to be applied in virtually every case, if only to entertain every option. As each variant in a variation unit is tested by one criterion after another, some criteria are likely to compete or to conflict with others – some supporting one reading, others supporting a different reading as the earliest attainable. It is at this point, as indicated earlier, that the 'balance of probabilities' comes into play, and the textual critic, even-handedly and without prejudice, must weigh the relevant arguments against one another to reach a reasoned and reasonable conclusion – hence the name Reasoned Eclecticism.

Various reasons offered for textual decisions may be found, for example, throughout the *Textual Commentary on the* [United Bible Societies'] *Greek New Testament*. Typical phrases used by its Editorial Committee to explain or to justify its decision in favour of a given variant include 'the preponderant weight of external evidence', 'diversity of external evidence', 'age and diversity of text-type witnesses', 'the earliest and best manuscripts', or 'scribal assimilation to [parallel material]', 'copyists substituted the more frequently used word', 'much more in accord with Markan style', 'best explains the origin of the other readings' and so on. As the search for the earliest reading progresses variation unit by variation unit, the eclectic text of each critical edition is formed from the variants judged to be prior to the others in each given unit. The resultant text itself never existed in any known manuscript, for no extant manuscript contains only readings that scholars would consider the earliest attainable text. After all, every surviving manuscript has been altered in the transmission process – some more, some less.

All the scholars discussed earlier (except Bentley and Lachmann) were the forerunners of current Reasoned Eclecticism, but the precursor of Thoroughgoing Eclecticism was C. H. Turner, who in 1923 took Westcott–Hort's basic dictum, 'Knowledge of documents should precede final judgment upon readings',[52] and turned it on its head: 'Knowledge of an author's usage should precede final judgement.'[53] The force of this change, as evident later from the main proponents of this form of eclecticism, George D. Kilpatrick and then J. Keith Elliott, was to counter the view of Westcott–Hort (and their many followers) that certain 'best' manuscripts and 'best' textual groups could

[52] Westcott and Hort, *New Testament*, vol. II, p. 31.

[53] C. H. Turner, 'Markan Usage: Notes, Critical and Exegetical, on the Second Gospel', *JTS* 25 (1923–4), pp. 377–86 at p. 377; reprinted in J. Keith Elliott (ed.), *The Language and Style of the Gospel of Mark: An Edition of C. H. Turner's 'Notes on Markan Usage' Together with Other Comparable Studies*, NovTSup 71 (Leiden: Brill, 1993), pp. 3–12 at p. 3. This volume reprinted Turner's entire series (1923–8).

be used almost mechanically to accredit original readings. For Kilpatrick, in contrast, a textual 'decision rests ultimately with the criteria as distinct from the manuscripts, and our evaluation of the manuscripts must be determined by the criteria'.[54] Elliott has repeatedly described the Westcott–Hort view, and that of others who place great weight on external evidence, as the 'cult of the best manuscript' (Codex B, along with Codex ℵ), and he has insisted that this practice must be replaced by the 'cult of the best reading', which 'devotes its main attention to the individual variants themselves and very little attention to external evidence'. The focus, therefore, is on the quality of each reading, not on the character of the witnesses that contain them: 'We are not concerned with the age, prestige, or popularity of the manuscripts supporting the readings we would adopt as original.'[55] It is clear, then, that Thoroughgoing Eclecticism moves thoroughly away from the external criteria – the very principles of first importance for most Reasoned Eclectics – and operates almost exclusively with internal criteria applied to individual variation units. The name, then, derives from the method's thorough emphasis on internal criteria for constructing the eclectic text of the New Testament.

If Thoroughgoing Eclecticism stands in opposition to Westcott–Hort's heavy reliance upon the 'best' manuscripts, what is the relationship of Reasoned Eclecticism to Westcott–Hort? Both the Reasoned approach and Westcott–Hort work with a combination of external and internal criteria, but in a different fashion. Westcott–Hort employed external – that is, manuscript – evidence (including conflated readings) to accredit the 'Neutral' and 'Western' texts as early over against the later 'Syrian' text. Next, they utilised internal evidence to judge the cumulative quality of readings in manuscripts and textual groups so as to identify the 'best' manuscripts (the generally uncontaminated 'Neutral' manuscripts B with ℵ). This process led to the exclusion of the equally or even more ancient 'Western' text, whose distinctive readings they characterised as aberrant and corrupt. Then in a sense they abandoned the internal criteria until they needed them again to determine the 'original' readings in cases where their best witnesses were in conflict.

[54] George D. Kilpatrick, 'Western Text and Original Text in the Gospels and Acts', *JTS* 44 (1943), pp. 24–36 at pp. 25–6; reprinted in J. Keith Elliott (ed.), *The Principles and Practice of New Testament Textual Criticism: Collected Essays of G. D. Kilpatrick*, BETL 96 (Leuven: Peeters, 1990), pp. 113–27 at p. 115. Kilpatrick claimed that he intended no disparagement of external evidence (p. 36; reprint, p. 126), but the reality appears to be otherwise.

[55] J. Keith Elliott, 'Rational Criticism and the Text of the New Testament', *Theology* 75 (1972), pp. 338–43 at pp. 340–1.

Over against the Westcott–Hort scheme, Reasoned Eclecticism would appear to be more even-handed because it employs both external and internal criteria in a balanced fashion and more as equally valid approaches. Reasoned Eclecticism, of course, may first explore the array of external evidence, but then it moves in a spiral fashion from external to internal and around again, all the while gaining data on the probability of each reading as more likely earlier than others. The process continues until probability builds up to the point of a reasonable decision for one or another variant. In this vetting process the external criteria may trump internal considerations, or the internal criteria may be more compelling than the external. Scanning the decisions reported in the *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, which fully employed Reasoned Eclecticism, suggests that this method functions rather well, even if unanimous agreement is not always within reach.

Overall, the coexistence of the two separate but overlapping critical methods, Thoroughgoing and Reasoned Eclecticism, has been fruitful for the development and refinement of the criteria for the priority of readings.

Current critical editions

Reasoned Eclecticism has been employed in the production of all recent critical editions of the Greek (or Greek–Latin) New Testament that are widely used (listing here only those revised since 1980):[56]

- *Novi Testamenti Biblia Graeca et Latina*, ed. Joseph M. Bover, SJ (1968, 6th edn., 1981).
- *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, ed. August Merk, SJ (1933, 11th edn., 1992).
- Nestle–Aland editions: *Novum Testamentum Graece*, ed. Eberhard Nestle (1st edn., 1898, to 12th edn., 1923); Erwin Nestle (13th edn., 1927 to 21st edn., 1952); Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland (22nd edn., 1956, to 25th edn., 1963); Kurt Aland et al. (26th edn., 1979); Barbara and Kurt Aland et al. (27th edn., 1993); Münster Institute for New Testament Textual Research (28th edn., 2012).

[56] Two editions of the Majority or Byzantine text have not been included: Hodges and Farstad (1982) and Robinson and Pierpont (1991) (see note 30). Hodges and Farstad's 'majority text method' was exactly that: 'the individual reading which has the earliest beginning is the one most likely to survive in a majority of documents. And the earliest reading of all is the original one' (pp. xi–xii). In certain cases of rival variants, however, they spoke again of the majority factor, but also of weighing the 'intrinsic and transcriptional probabilities' (p. xxii). Robinson and Pierpont's method was a mirror-image of

- United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament*, ed. K. Aland et al. (1st edn., 1966 to 3rd edn., 1975); B. Aland et al. (4th edn., 1993).
- *Novum Testamentum Graecum: Editio critica maior*, ed. B. and K. Aland et al. (1997–2005).

All but the *Editio critica maior* are hand editions, and the 'Major Critical Edition' has become the joint project of the Münster Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung (Institute for New Testament Textual Research in Münster) and the International Greek New Testament Project (IGNTP), under a formal agreement concluded in 2000. The IGNTP was established within the North American 'Society of Biblical Literature' in 1948 and was joined a few years later by an already existing British Committee. After forty years and volunteer hand work by more than three hundred scholars (since relevant computer programs were not yet available) the Project published a critical apparatus (not a critical edition) of the Gospel of Luke (1984–7).[57] The North American Committee, renewed in 1988 and connecting again with the British Committee, began work on the Gospel of John, employing the 'Collate' program for coding all data electronically so that complete transcripts of manuscripts and of variations between manuscripts, and other sophisticated tasks, can be accomplished. The data will provide a critical edition of John's Gospel for the *Editio critica maior*, in conjunction with the Münster Institute. In the meantime, IGNTP, from its United Kingdom centre at Birmingham University, has published two volumes on the papyri and the majuscules of John,[58] while the Münster team completed, for the major critical edition, the Catholic Letters.[59] The Acts of the Apostles and remaining portions of the

Thoroughgoing Eclecticism's nearly exclusive employment of internal evidence, for it adopts 'a return to external evidence following the sound principles of John W. Burgon', while rejecting the '*subjective* preference … for certain types of "internal evidence" regarding a reading's length, difficulty, style, or contextual considerations' (p. xx).

[57] American and British Committees of the International Greek New Testament Project, *The New Testament in Greek: The Gospel of Luke*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984–7).

[58] American and British Committees of the International Greek New Testament Project, *The New Testament in Greek:* IV. *The Gospel According to St. John, Volume One: The Papyri*, ed. W. J. Elliott and D. C. Parker, New Testament Tools and Studies 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1995); *The New Testament in Greek:* IV. *The Gospel According to St. John, Volume Two: The Majuscules*, ed. U. B. Schmid, with W. J. Elliott and D. C. Parker, New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents 37 (Leiden: Brill, 2007). On IGNTP's history and present work see J. Keith Elliott, 'The International Project to Establish a Critical Apparatus to Luke's Gospel', *NTS* 29 (1983), pp. 531–8; Eldon Jay Epp, 'The International Greek New Testament Project: Motivation and History', *NovT* 39 (1997), pp. 1–20; David C. Parker, 'The Principio Project: A Reconstruction of the Johannine Tradition', *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 13 (2000), pp. 111–18.

[59] Institute for New Testament Textual Research, *Novum testamentum graecum, editio critica maior:* IV, *Catholic epistles*, ed. Barbara Aland, †Kurt Aland, Gerd Mink and Klaus Wachtel

New Testament will follow from joint efforts in the years to come. A high percentage of New Testament textual critics worldwide have become contributors to this massive, joint project.

Conclusion

A history of critical editions of the Greek New Testament and the methods developed to create them coincide with virtually the entire history of New Testament textual criticism. Essentially, the discipline developed in a twofold pattern. As scholars (beginning in the sixteenth century) increasingly became aware of numerous manuscripts containing early Christian writings in libraries and monasteries of Europe and the Mediterranean area, they collated them against the 'received text' and began to collect variant readings. The accumulating array of readings raised questions about the nature of the various documents from which they were taken, and manuscripts of similar antiquity or with similar patterns of variation were placed in appropriate groups ('East', 'West', 'Alexandrian', etc.). Early on, preferences for one group or another facilitated alterations to the established text of the day, and eventually scholars realised that a fresh text should be constructed. The fundamental criterion dominant in numerous editions was preference for readings from the oldest manuscripts or groups, or from the 'best' or most widely distributed witnesses. Thus, external criteria developed.

At the same time, as exemplified in Bengel, internal criteria were devised to decide between or among competing variants in a single passage by identifying unconscious scribal errors and various predilections of scribes and readers (whether conscious or not). In hindsight, most important was selecting the variant that could best account for the origin of others in a variation unit. The two sets of criteria were most often employed in tandem, though frequent tension and conflict required that decisions had to be resolved in each case through the 'balance of probabilities'. In tracing these developments chronologically and conceptually, the evolution of New Testament textual criticism as a whole has also been illuminated.

Throughout the entire history of this discipline, textual variants, of course, have been the main concern: which variants should be elevated to the resultant critical text? What should be the fate of those not selected for such a text?

(Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997–2005) (2 parts each): 1. *James* (1997); 2. *The Letters of Peter* (2000); 3. *The First Letter of John* (2003); 4. *The Second and Third Letter of John, the Letter of Jude* (added editor: Holger Strutwolf, 2005); 5. *Catholic Letters* (2nd rev. edn., 2 vols., 2013).

More often than not the rejected variants faded from view, notably wherever the focus was on the identification of the single, 'true' reading in the text – a dominant goal all along. In the past two decades, however – though based on earlier proposals – New Testament textual criticism has moved in fresh directions with new emphases in these matters. Noteworthy is the emphasis on variants that do not find a place in the critical text at the top of the pages in our critical editions. It has been demonstrated that many of these variants conceal a narrative, often long hidden. For example, Bart D. Ehrman has shown that numerous variations have been introduced into the text to confirm or to initiate 'orthodox' points of doctrine over against alternate viewpoints abundant in the Christological controversies during Christianity's first three centuries. In a different way, David C. Parker has pointed to textual variants that permit a glimpse into the real-life issues of theology, ethics and church practice as scribes, readers and other early Christians used and interpreted scriptural texts. One result of such interpretive rewritings of the text was an array of textual variants, which, in turn, disclosed alternate meanings they found embedded in the textual tradition. Parker also questioned the myopic aim of seeking a single 'original text' of the New Testament, or at least the excessive emphasis on that elusive goal. Textual variants, but especially rejected variants, thereby gained fresh significance through the stories they had to tell. The present writer has analysed the 'multivalence' of the term 'original text' and has sought equal recognition for the meaningful variants that so often, when rejected in the text-critical process, have been discarded like chaff, whereas, in reality, they can disclose much about life and thought in various periods of church history. These approaches have come to be known as 'narrative textual criticism' and offer new and promising vistas for the discipline.[60]

Finally, based on the preceding discussions of the nature of textual transmission, the criteria for the priority of readings, and current practice, the *goal of New Testament textual criticism* might be stated as follows: New Testament textual criticism, employing aspects of both science and art, studies the transmission of the New Testament text and the manuscripts that facilitate

[60] See Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993; updated and with a new afterword, 2011); David C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Parker, *Introduction*, pp. 180–90, 338; D. C. Parker, 'Textual Criticism and Theology', *ExpT* 118 (2007), pp. 583–9; Eldon Jay Epp, 'The Multivalence of the Term "Original Text" in New Testament Textual Criticism', *HTR* 92 (1999), pp. 245–81; reprinted in Epp, *Perspectives*, pp. 551–93; E. J. Epp, 'It's All about Variants: A Variant-Conscious Approach to New Testament Textual Criticism', *HTR* 100 (2007), pp. 275–308.

its transmission, with the unitary goal of establishing the earliest attainable text (which serves as a baseline) and, at the same time, of assessing the textual variants that emerge from the baseline text so as to hear the narratives of early Christian thought and life that inhere in the array of meaningful variants.

This egalitarian view of variants – both those selected for the text and those rejected – has already moved numerous textual critics towards a broader view of their discipline – one that respects all meaningful variants and thereby both expands our pool of significant data and richly illuminates real-life situations in the early churches. This, after all, is the heart and soul of New Testament scholarship.

2

Producing the text: production and distribution of popular editions of the Bible

LESLIE HOWSAM AND SCOTT MCLAREN

The Bible is not like other books, except when it comes to matters of production and distribution. Material and commercial considerations, such as the quality of ink or the price of paper, affect both the sacred text and the ephemeral best-seller. But even in the printing house, bibles are unlike other works: rather than dealing with recalcitrant authors, the printer and publisher must relate to ecclesiastical and political authorities. Corrections to ensure textual accuracy are vital, whereas in secular works they might be overlooked. Moreover, this is a popular book, which has remained 'in print' since before there was a printing press, and continues to encounter a high demand in a digital age. As it happens, the people concerned with its distribution have found it advantageous to market this particular book in a multiplicity of formats, printed in numerous fonts on various qualities of paper – and more recently offered also in electronic, audio and visual forms. Printed bibles, with which this section is primarily concerned, have also been differentiated by the bookbinder's art and craft, so that they appear in a bewildering multiplicity of sizes, materials and colours, all designed to appeal to the cultural and theological tastes of readers and recipients. This is an area of study where a great deal of research remains to be undertaken, since only a handful of scholars have considered the material and commercial aspects of the production and distribution of the Scriptures.

From the mid-eighteenth to the late nineteenth centuries the chronology of production and distribution of the Bible, especially in popular editions, combines two narratives. The first traces a remarkable story of technological development in the printing and related industries, while the second follows the growth of cultural infrastructures that supported evangelical enthusiasm. For Protestants the cheap bible held a powerful allure, while most Roman Catholics perceived it as a risky innovation. The Orthodox and Judaic traditions were also affected by the increasing availability of printed versions of their sacred books, but it was evangelical Protestants in Europe and

North America who created – in the bible societies – institutions to promote Christianity by means of scripture distribution. A combination of proselytising fervour, imperial power and international relations came to control the politics of bible distribution. Even organisations and individuals who worked outside the Protestant–evangelical network were affected by its way of understanding the place of the Bible in religious and indeed national life. But as the nineteenth century ended and the twentieth began, and the technical problems of printing were overcome, a third theme emerged. As the largest bible societies adopted strategies for operating in an increasingly complex geopolitical context, they became allied with global forces of indigenisation and anti-colonialism as they began to set up autonomous local organisations abroad with local leadership, and adopt cooperative policies with indigenous churches for preserving local and tribal languages, even when such actions opposed government policy.

The cheap bible came about because of innovations in the technology of printing in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Historians have noted the long duration of the 'hand-press period'. Until the 1810s and 1820s the equipment used by Gutenberg and his successors during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries remained almost unchanged. Shops were small, and the trade was tightly controlled by political and (in the case of scripture) ecclesiastical authorities. The hand press was operated by two or three workers, and could produce only 200–250 pages in an hour. Paper was made from rags, cast-off clothing that was processed to produce a tough, resilient product that remained scarce and expensive. Type had to be cast from lead mixed with other metals, and set by hand a few pages at a time. Each setting was used to print one small edition, of a few hundred copies, and then distributed so that it could be reused for other jobs.[1] For those printers who specialised in bibles the resulting introduction of errors was a serious problem. This was addressed in Saxony by Karl Hildebrand von Canstein (1667–1719), with the foundation in 1710 of the Canstein Bible Institute (Bibelanstalt) at Halle. Canstein used his financial resources to purchase enough type to keep bible pages in Luther's German version standing, unavailable for other jobs but ready to be corrected as errors were discovered. Similarly, the Philadelphia publisher Mathew Carey kept some bibles in standing type in the early years of the nineteenth century.[2] Elsewhere, however, religious and publishing authorities had to wait for the

[1] For technological and cultural change see Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (eds.), *A Companion to the History of the Book* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

[2] For Canstein see Michael H. Black, *Cambridge University Press, 1584–1984* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 107; for Carey see Gutjahr, *American Bible*, p. 13.

development of a practicable stereotype plate; it appeared at a tumultuous moment.

The latter decades of the eighteenth century were a time of political revolution and economic turmoil, as a revolutionary war in the American colonies was succeeded by one in France, and then by the Napoleonic empire and ensuing wars and trade embargoes across the Atlantic. Roman Catholic authorities were authorising printers to the Holy See to produce copies of vernacular translations of the Latin Vulgate of St Jerome, such as the Douay–Reims Version in English. In many Protestant countries it was the secular authorities who controlled production. In the British empire, the lucrative privilege of printing the King James (or Authorised) Version was forbidden to all but two types of presses: the Oxford and Cambridge University Presses under their Royal Charters, and other firms designated as the King's (or Queen's) Printers. But these restrictions applied only to the Authorised Version. Ordinary printers were free to tackle the task of publishing other versions in English, sometimes with commentaries or illustrations, and all versions in other languages, if they could manage the substantial investment in paper, type and labour required to produce an edition of the Bible. The Authorised Version contains 774,746 words, about seven times the length of a substantial novel or monograph. Versions with illustrations, commentaries and other addenda were attractive to many readers, but they suffered from the suspicion of ecclesiastical and political authorities.

Once printed, bibles had to be distributed. In the decades before the introduction of bible societies, religious authorities undertook this task directly. Within the Roman Catholic communion, distribution was generally limited to those copies required by members of the clergy. (An exception was the work of Abbé de Barneville, a priest of the Oratory at Paris. Beginning in 1719 he translated or sponsored translations of the New Testament into French, and formed a Societé biblique catholique française to distribute copies at low prices.)[3] The Orthodox tradition was likewise opposed to widespread circulation of the unmediated text of a complex and easily misunderstood work. But most Protestant denominations, with their faith in the saving power of the scriptural text alone, tackled the problem of putting books directly into the hands of readers. Above all, Protestant believers were concerned with preparing and distributing scriptures to the heathen and pagan souls they encountered in the course of commercial and imperial expansion. In England they

[3] Orentin Douen, *Histoire de la société biblique protestante de Paris, 1818–1868* (Paris: Agence de la société biblique protestante, 1868), pp. 46–51.

were aided initially by a Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (an Anglican missionary organisation founded in 1701) and matched by parallel organisations in Europe and, later, the United States. At the same time, though, the needs of poor – and potentially politically radical – workers at home were never far from the minds of British religious enthusiasts.

The revolutionary turmoil of the eighteenth century provided the backdrop for the evangelical revival associated with John Wesley (1703–91) both in England and in the United States (where it was called the Great Awakening). Among Lutherans in Germany the parallel excitement was known as Pietism. In addition to a strong emphasis on preaching, evangelicals were committed to personal salvation, and felt responsible for helping God to save the souls of others. Evangelicalism eventually caused a break in the Church of England in the decades following Wesley's establishment of the Methodist movement, and interdenominational tension remained high for many years. Anglicans distributed bibles and prayer books through the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK). Members of dissenting denominations, however, were anxious to share in official and unofficial aspects of national and community governance, including the leadership of religious publishing. The production and distribution of religious tracts was one such aspect. British Methodists had been distributing books as part of their mission for decades. By the mid-nineteenth century the American Methodist Book Concern in New York (established in 1789) had grown into the world's largest publisher of any stripe. In London a pan-evangelical Religious Tract Society (RTS) began meeting in 1799.[4] It was at a meeting of the RTS in 1804 that a Welsh Calvinistic Methodist minister, Thomas Charles of Bala, addressed his colleagues about the scarcity of SPCK bibles. For the first of many times in the annals of bible distribution, the story was told of Mary Jones, a child who saved her own earnings to buy a Bible in the Welsh language, and walked miles to purchase it, only to find the supply exhausted because so few had been printed. With evangelical enthusiasm typical of the times, members of the RTS decided to establish a new society for the purpose of distributing affordable editions of the Scriptures, not only to Wales and to England, but to the whole British empire, and indeed the rest of the world.

The laws and structure of the new organisation, called the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), responded to the social and religious tensions within English society. It was a middle-class movement that was ecumenical

[4] Aileen Fyffe, 'Commerce and Philanthropy: The Religious Tract Society and the Business of Publishing', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 9:2 (2004), pp. 164–88.

before ecumenicalism, with members across the Protestant spectrum and even a handful of Catholics. A 'fundamental principle' was established, that the only versions of the Scriptures to be circulated by this pan-evangelical society would be 'without note or comment'. That simple restriction was designed to set aside doctrinal differences and made ecumenical cooperation possible, and for the most part it succeeded in doing so. The new Society was governed by a committee made up of equal numbers of Anglicans and dissenters, along with a smaller group of members belonging to foreign churches. Similarly there were three secretaries, all of whom were ordained men, again representing the Church of England, dissenters and foreign churches.

Although the domestic operation of the BFBS can fairly be described as a centralised organisation, with its managers based at Bible House in London, the development of local branches called auxiliaries quickly added a dimension that was more complex and decentralised. Each Society member was also a subscriber, and was entitled to buy bibles at a discount for distribution in his or her own household or community. But as early as 1809 a more dynamic and interactive method of distribution arose, as Auxiliary Societies, as well as Ladies' Bible Associations, were founded in several towns and cities, with the dual purpose of raising funds for the foreign project and distributing bibles locally. Despite some controversy, and opposition from Anglicans who regarded association with the BFBS as disloyal, local auxiliaries developed rapidly and flourished. They sold bibles to people of the working class by collecting the modest subsidised price in instalments of one penny per week. A layman working in the London borough of Southwark, Charles Stokes Dudley, developed a 'system' for making this programme efficient, laid out in his book *An Analysis of the System of the Bible Society* (1821). But it was Dudley's own charisma and energy that was most significant; he travelled miles on horseback, animating volunteers wherever he went. The son of a prominent Irish Quaker preacher, Mary Stokes, Dudley had no qualms about involving middle-class 'ladies' in his cause, and many evangelical women responded ardently to an opportunity to serve God and also have an occupation worthy of their frustrated energies. The interaction of middle-class evangelical enthusiasm with the dearth of scriptures in working-class households and among the heathen abroad, all focused on the production and circulation of a material object, has been characterised as a 'bible transaction'.[5]

[5] Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*, pp. 35–60. For women's involvement see also chapters by Roger H. Martin and Sarah Lane in Batalden et al. (eds.), *Sowing the Word*.

With strong financial and moral support from local auxiliaries and bible associations, the leaders of the BFBS set about turning themselves into publishers. They believed that their bibles should be sold at modest, affordable prices because a bible given gratis would not be valued in the same way as one for which the recipient had saved and committed the necessary funds.[6] They selected an official bookseller, to handle the initial phase of distribution from their warehouse at Bible House in London, but refused to countenance any dealings with the general bookselling trade. There was, however, no way to avoid working closely with printers and with bookbinders.

In a concurrence that the founders of the BFBS regarded as providential, the beginning of the Society coincided with the development of new printing technologies that made their mission far more practicable. Just as importantly, as production became faster and less costly, the reading public began to expand dramatically. The industrial revolution was well advanced by the 1810s and 1820s, but the book trades had been relatively slow to industrialise, so that by the time they were ready to change, massive population increases were already well under way, as were the social transformations associated with urbanisation. Co-religionists of the RTS and BFBS, leaders of the Sunday School and other educational societies, had institutionalised the provision of basic skills of reading and writing to the sons and daughters of the poor. When the children born in succeeding decades also secured a few hours a week of leisure, the requirements for an expanded reading public had been supplied.[7] All these hallmarks of industrialisation were to be replicated elsewhere a few years later, but it happened first in Britain, and the consequent sense of revolutionary transformation was intense.

The bible society idea was global from the beginning. Christians corresponding with the BFBS founded a society in Nuremberg in 1804, followed by groups in various other German principalities, in the Scandinavian and Baltic countries and in the Netherlands. Under the leadership of Foreign Secretary Karl Friedrich August Steinkopf the BFBS established communications with these societies, and in some cases printed bibles or raised funds for their support. It was not until after the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, however, that the BFBS was able to expand in Europe and into Asia, and at that time develop a network of paid agents who travelled widely, promoting the establishment of new societies. Victor de Pressensé, the agent for France, made

[6] Leslie Howsam, 'The Nineteenth-Century Bible Society and "The Evil of Gratuitous Distribution"', in James Raven (ed.), *Free Print and Non-Commercial Publishing since 1700* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2000), pp. 119–34.

[7] Altick, *English Common Reader*.

an important contribution to bible distribution when (in 1837) he persuaded the Society to let him employ colporteurs, or door-to-door salesmen. The system of colportage developed into a successful method of distribution and also a vivid mythology: the heroic tales of colporteurs, their adventures and their sufferings were a staple of the Society's publications. Spain, with its strong commitment to Catholicism, was a particular challenge to the BFBS, and a number of agents were sent there. Most famously the author of *The Bible in Spain* (1843), George Borrow (1803–81), based his popular memoir on experiences as the Society's agent in the late 1830s. In Canada, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere, it was not agents but local auxiliary bible societies that handled the work of distribution. A similar system was established in India, but in Africa and East Asia the BFBS worked through missionaries. In most cases these agents and missionaries were encouraged to use versions and translations that were accepted in the local area; similarly, they tried to use local printers and even booksellers when that was possible. Colportage, however, remained the best means of distribution when other methods were forbidden or restricted.[8]

The Bible Society's success was alarming to some Christians, and the ideal of pan-evangelical cooperation sometimes encountered implacable opposition. One such schism occurred in the 1820s, over the question of including the apocryphal books. Initially the BFBS circulated bibles without the Apocrypha, but agents and colporteurs on the European continent were prepared to meet the demand of Lutheran and Roman Catholic customers for versions with which they were familiar. Many dissenters in Britain (especially BFBS supporters in Scotland), however, regarded this flexible policy as 'contamination' and refused to countenance any subsidisation of the additional books. Eventually many auxiliaries in Scotland, and a few in England, seceded from the BFBS over the issue. Severe losses ensued, both in financial and morale terms. Nor was this the last controversy: the BFBS (and later the American Bible Society) remained subject to criticism for their choices of translations and versions, and for their policies with respect to printing, binding and distribution.[9]

Although the BFBS, with its dependent organisations, was not the only bible society, for the first half-century or so it dominated the global evangelical

[8] Stephen Batalden, 'Introduction', in Batalden et al. (eds.), *Sowing the Word*, pp. 4–6; Ann Ridler, 'Obedience and Disobedience: George Borrow's Idiosyncratic Relationship with the Bible Society', in Batalden et al. (eds.), *Sowing the Word*, pp. 286–304. For narratives of colportage in the USA see Nord, *Faith in Reading*, pp. 131–49.

[9] For pan-evangelicalism see Martin, *Evangelicals United*, pp. 103–5, 123–31; Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*, pp. 13–17.

project. Politically influential, wealthy and extremely successful abroad, its power was largely due to the support of local auxiliaries and bible associations at home. Few other societies, apart from the Netherlands Bible Society, which operated in the Dutch East Indies from 1814, and the National Bible Society of Scotland, which supported Scottish missions in various theatres abroad, undertook any significant work beyond their own national contexts. The most important exception, however, was the American Bible Society (ABS), which developed an independent programme of distribution at home and abroad that eventually brought it into vigorous competition with its British counterpart.

The establishment of the ABS, the first transatlantic society, in 1816 marked the beginning of a global bible-publishing movement. Bibles had been in circulation since colonial times, but production was restricted by the requirement that they be imported from Britain under royal authority. Such bibles were received, however, into a burgeoning print culture that would become rich in books, newspapers and religious periodicals by the mid-nineteenth century. Philadelphia printer Robert Aitken printed the first English New Testament in the colonies in 1777, and 10,000 copies of the Bible in 1782. Backed by a loan from the government of Pennsylvania, he sought further to fund the huge expense of his investment by taking advance subscriptions for the book as well as by selling or trading copies to other printers and booksellers. Aitken's venture proved financially unprofitable after 1789, however, when trade with England reopened and he was unable to match the price of higher quality English editions of the Bible. It was Mathew Carey who published the first successful American editions, also in Philadelphia – the Catholic Douay translation in 1790 and the King James in quarto format in 1801. Carey was a thriving entrepreneur, making his bibles available in a wide range of formats, paper quality and binding materials; some even came with maps and illustrations. The problem of shipping was first solved by door-to-door approaches and then by establishing depots in the shops of small merchants. Although one of his customers was the Philadelphia Bible Society, founded in 1808 as the first in the United States, few local societies could undertake distribution within their own pioneer communities on the model of their counterparts in settled villages in England.[10]

In 1816 members of the Philadelphia and other local societies joined together to form the American Bible Society under Elias Boudinot. Their ambition, announced in 1829 as a 'General Supply', was to put a Bible into

[10] Gutjahr, *American Bible*, pp. 18–29; Nord, *Faith in Reading*, pp. 19–25.

every household in the United States within two years, and to go on furnishing copies as the population expanded. The programme has been called the first of the mass media in America. Through the 1830s the ABS tried to use local auxiliaries on the British model for the first General Supply, but they were never really satisfactory, lacking the ability to collect enough money and undertake distribution with volunteer resources. After 1840 the ABS changed its system and used paid bible salesmen to develop a coherent system of bible agency. Long before the fourth General Supply, of 1882 (which still aimed to put a Bible into every American household), the Society was sending out its own agents and distributing bibles directly. As the United States population and economy expanded throughout the nineteenth century, the ABS found itself distributing translations in languages other than English to immigrants, and consequently coming into conflict with Roman Catholic authorities.[11] Moreover, in the time leading up to the Civil War, the ABS was asked to declare itself with respect to slavery. Unwilling to involve itself in secular politics, the Society found itself criticised by abolitionists for distributing too few bibles to slaves; during the war Union supporters blamed the ABS for maintaining relationships with the Confederacy, while Confederates regarded it as a Yankee institution. One local auxiliary in the South even ordered bibles from the BFBS.[12]

Arguably, it was the ABS's inability to 'forge a national consensus' that brought them into the field of overseas distribution, and hence into direct competition with the BFBS. A related factor was the need to compete at home, with other American missionary organisations, for philanthropic dollars. Activity among 'perishing heathens' in the 'Bible lands' of the Levant was a good deal more attractive to supporters than the circulation of bibles to ungrateful urban Roman Catholic immigrants. Whereas in Britain members of local bible associations and auxiliaries remained active at the local level into the 1850s, many American auxiliaries had become dormant. They responded, however, to the stimulus of a national or international campaign. In 1836 the first foreign agent went to Smyrna, where the BFBS agent expressed a prescient concern about overlapping territories. A Constantinople Bible House, complete with printing equipment and salesroom, opened in 1872.[13]

But if they differed over methods in the nineteenth century, the BFBS and the ABS were united by the idea of the cheap bible, and both adopted the new technologies of production. Indeed, with their massive demands they actually

[11] Wosh, *Spreading the Word*, pp. 62–7, 105–17. The ABS was more willing than the BFBS to give away free copies of the Scriptures (Nord, *Faith in Reading*, pp. 43–5).
[12] Nord, *Faith in Reading*, pp. 42–52, 63; Wosh, *Spreading the Word*, pp. 145–7, 200–27.
[13] Wosh, *Spreading the Word*, pp. 151–74, 244–5.

became agents of change for the printing and publishing industries in both countries. Steam power was brought to bear first on paper making with the development of the Fourdrinier machine in 1804. Rather than make paper in single sheets, the machine produced continuous rolls, though it still depended upon rags for raw materials. Governments also imposed a duty on paper, which remained for many years the most expensive component of book publishing. Printing and bookbinding were eventually also industrialised, although the application of steam power came relatively late to both processes. Most significantly for the publishers of bibles, the technology of stereotype became practicable. Made from an alloy of tin, antimony and lead, each stereotype plate was much larger than an individual piece of type and, depending on the size of the book being produced, could be used to print four, eight, sixteen, or more contiguous pages at one time. Stereotype plates were made by pouring liquid alloy into a papier mâché or plaster of Paris mould that had been taken from the surface of a forme consisting of individual pieces of type set in place by a typesetter or compositor. As soon as the original mould was complete the pieces of individual type could be reused to print other books or to make other moulds. Crucially, the technology also made it possible for corrections to be introduced without destroying and reproducing the mould. Furthermore, the cost of resetting the type was eliminated, so that bibles, prayer books and catechisms, some schoolbooks and other standard works could be reprinted very cheaply. Experiments with the technology had begun in the eighteenth century, but printers had resisted the threat to their craft traditions, and it was the third Earl Stanhope (1753–1816) who rediscovered it early in the nineteenth, working in Britain with Andrew Wilson. In April 1804 Wilson, a prominent London printer, made a contract to share the stereotype 'secret' with the Cambridge University Press. Seven months later the BFBS had placed its first large order and over the next few years, despite the inevitable problems with implementing a new technology, Cambridge and the other privileged presses worked to solve them – in close collaboration with the BFBS. Meanwhile, the ABS embraced stereotype printing with as much enthusiasm as their counterparts in Britain. Unencumbered by the ancient privileges of universities and government printers, the ABS produced their own stereotype plates and printed and bound their own bibles at Bible House in New York City.[14]

Bookbinding was a crucial book-trade technology, and (as with paper making, typesetting and printing) the needs of the bible societies forced changes

[14] Gutjahr, *American Bible*, pp. 9–37; Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*, pp. 79–81; Nord, *Faith in Reading*, pp. 66–71.

in the industry. In the eighteenth century books had conventionally been sold unbound, in sheets, so that the purchaser could match the covers to an existing library. Few publishers before the 1820s arranged for a whole edition of books to be bound, but the societies could not afford to risk having the Apocrypha, commentaries, illustrations, or any other 'notes and comments' included with the sheets of the Scriptures they had sanctioned. In New York bookbinding was centralised at Bible House, but the answer for the BFBS was to contract with various London shops for their work. Both societies established stringent criteria for strength and variety of materials. The spines, or 'backs', of their bibles had to be specially prepared to withstand heavy usage. Well-off customers could order books bound in calf or in sheepskin of various qualities (skiver, morocco and roan) for their own use. For charitable purposes they required copies bound in canvas or in the cheapest leathers; the binders in London were supplied with stamps to designate the latter copies 'sold at a loss for schools and the poor'. The great variety of binding materials to cover a common book was part of the cultural cement that institutionalised the social roles of both the BFBS and the ABS.[15]

Throughout the early decades in the printing and bookbinding trades on both sides of the Atlantic, and to a lesser extent in continental Europe, the prominence of bible societies was met with suspicion and apprehension. Though they were non-profit organisations, they were cutting deeply into the potential profits of printers and publishers who might otherwise have taken advantage of the extensive market for bibles. Furthermore, printers were forced to let go of long-held craft traditions to meet the price demands of the evangelical societies, using stereotype plates, machine-made paper and eventually steam-powered presses. The societies required tough, durable books that would stand up to years of intensive reading by the faithful; they needed the books bound in inexpensive but attractive covers, to facilitate shipping and to prevent the introduction of anything that would lead to division. During the 1830s and 1840s the BFBS suffered greatly from negative publicity when the Trade Society of Journeymen Bookbinders made public a charge that the shop where the Society's bibles were bound made use of sweated female labour. Many members of local BFBS auxiliaries and Ladies' Bible Associations, hearing that 'their' binders might be driven into prostitution, were shocked and disappointed.[16] Less scandalous but more significant was the discourse of free

[15] Gutjahr, *American Bible*, pp. 39–88; Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*, pp. 121–30.
[16] Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*, pp. 133–49.

trade, which inveighed on both sides of the Atlantic, about the restriction of scripture printing to a limited number of 'monopolist' publishers.[17]

The power and influence of bible societies has been so great that it is possible to overlook the production and circulation of scripture versions outside their influence. As well as Vatican-approved versions, these included translations other than those approved by royal authority in Britain and any version that incorporated notes or comments. In Britain enterprising printers got around the restriction of the bible privilege to the Royal and University Presses by publishing the Authorised Version with commentaries. There was a great deal of money to be made, so much so that business practices might be somewhat unscrupulous. In the United States commercial printers such as Harper & Brothers, unable to compete with the ABS on grounds of cheapness, turned instead to producing bibles with notes, commentaries, tables, illustrations and elaborate bindings. Technology played a role here, as electrotype plates became available to replace rough woodblocks and the more expensive copperplate. Biblical illustrations made using this technology were attractive to readers of all ages and introduced a level of visual, as well as textual, interpretation. (Sometimes this provoked controversy, as with Isaiah Thomas's folio edition of 1791, where American readers found bare-breasted images of Eve and Mary Magdalene very disturbing.) Maps of the Holy Land were another common feature. Commercial, illustrated bibles were often published in parts, to make them more affordable to the consumer. Many were marketed as family bibles complete with blank pages to be filled in with genealogical data. In the United States distribution of these illustrated bibles was often handled by subscription through such firms as Harper & Brothers and the National Bible Press.[18] The family bible was an object that sanctified the family home, serving as a focal point in the Victorian parlour, and many people found it difficult to understand why the addition of supportive, illustrative, or genealogical material had to be defined as the introduction of a forbidden 'note or comment'.

Throughout the nineteenth century the 'fundamental principle' of the bible societies – distribution without note or comment – came into direct and often violent confrontation with the fundamental principle of Roman Catholicism, that the Scriptures must be interpreted to the faithful by the ordained clergy.

[17] Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*, pp. 188–91; Gutjahr, *American Bible*, p. 35.

[18] Gutjahr, *American Bible*, pp. 35–6, 54–6, 69–79; Wosh, *Spreading the Word*, pp. 19–22. For a literary interpretation of family bibles with commentaries see Mary Wilson Carpenter, *Imperial Bibles, Domestic Bodies: Women, Sexuality and Religion in the Victorian Market* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), pp. 3–24.

The Council of Trent had required Catholic publishers to ensure that their local bishop approved any edition of the Bible they printed. This stricture was reinforced by various papal encyclicals. Pius IX's 1847 *Qui Pluribus* referred to

> These crafty Bible Societies, which renew the ancient guile of heretics, cease not to thrust their Bibles upon all men, even the unlearned – their Bibles, which have been translated against the laws of the Church, and often contain false explanation of the text. Thus, the divine traditions, the teaching of the fathers, and the authority of the Catholic Church are rejected, and everyone in his own way interprets the words of the Lord, and distorts their meaning, thereby falling into miserable errors.

To much of this many members of the Protestant societies would have said a hearty 'amen', and indeed the opposition of Roman Catholics, and their harsh treatment of colporteurs and biblewomen abroad, was an important part of the BFBS and ABS message to their own faithful. But Roman Catholic leaders argued patiently that the church was not opposed to the circulation of the Scriptures in approved editions.

Protestant efforts to produce and circulate copies of the Bible were based on an assumption fundamentally different from that of Roman Catholics – that merely reading the text would change people's lives and in turn bring about salvation on a national and international level. Noah Porter, the president of Yale University from 1871 to 1886, believed, for example, that 'the Holy Spirit inspired readers as well as writers of sacred texts'. Certain changes in bible society assumptions and practices, in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, however, are indications of the recognition that the results had not been quite so dramatic. In Britain and Protestant Europe, as in the United States, the leaders of bible distribution were ever conscious of secular alternatives, which were frivolous not only in content but in their very approach to the printed text. Evangelicals believed that they were living 'in the midst of a dangerous reading revolution' wherein the Devil had a direct influence on the proliferation of novels and newspapers in circulation. Some worried that reading even religious periodicals might '[crowd] the Bible in our families into the background'.[19] Ironically, however, it was bible societies and others who so assiduously circulated copies of the Scriptures, whether out of evangelical motives or for profit, who had helped the book trades to develop the

[19] Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789–1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pp. 118–23, 176.

technologies that would make possible and available reading material in these unsuitable genres.

The first half-century, from 1804 to the 1860s, was the period of greatest success for both the BFBS and ABS. Even in these years, however, there was still a shortage of bibles, especially in the households of the poor, and the books were prohibitively expensive unless generously subsidised. During the second half of the century the price of all books decreased – earlier in the United States than in Britain and Europe – and consequently reduced the need for subsidised production and specialised means of distribution. In addition to new technologies of printing and bookbinding, it became possible by the 1890s to make paper from wood pulp rather than rags. At the same time, the broader culture in both Europe and North America became more secular, and the wider print culture was producing newspapers, pamphlets, books and magazines in a profusion that ended the special prominence of the Bible in English-speaking households on both sides of the Atlantic. The societies turned to distribution abroad, and problems of printing, bookbinding and local distribution were replaced by those of translation, cooperation with other missionary workers and relationships with overseas political authorities.

When members of bible societies and bible agencies from around the world gathered in March 1904 to celebrate the centennial of the BFBS, a delegate from the ABS called for inter-society cooperation on the grounds that both societies shared 'one God, one Bible, one language, one destiny'. That destiny revolved in large part around finding new ways to popularise the Bible on a truly global scale. Although the BFBS could already claim to have distributed more than 180 million copies of the Scriptures in hundreds of languages on every habitable continent through a massive infrastructure made up of 850 colporteurs and 8,000 auxiliaries, the vast majority of its distribution had taken place either within Europe or in regions controlled by the British empire. As the colonial era came to an end, the challenges of carrying on the work in independent countries became vastly more complex. And, following trends in the wider geopolitical sphere, the role played by the ABS in meeting these demands soon rivalled and eventually surpassed that of its older British counterpart.[20]

Two contrasting trends, one centripetal and one centrifugal, characterise this work throughout the twentieth century. On the one hand, bible societies began to standardise their practices and share their resources in unprecedented ways. The ABS proved more willing than the BFBS to adapt its

[20] Steer, *Good News for the World*, p. 279.

internal structures, policies and fundraising techniques to meet the demands of a mission field transformed by war, cultural revolutions, natural disasters and exploding populations – and thus began to expand into regions that the BFBS had previously regarded as its sole territory. By mid-century, however, this trend to consolidation came to be balanced by the contrary tendency to encourage the indigenisation of bible work and the establishment of local bible societies and production facilities where resident Christians, familiar with the myriad and complex obstacles arising from local circumstances, would be able to produce and distribute bibles in ways that were sufficiently unobtrusive to be successful. In a post-colonial context – particularly in Africa and Asia, where the Bible was often viewed with suspicion for political, religious and cultural reasons – this policy made sense, but it resulted in an unintended consequence. The emphasis on indigenisation has been identified as the agent of transformation, for some bible societies, into powerful anti-colonial agents where a tenacious insistence on distributing scriptures in local and tribal languages was a key factor in giving indigenous populations the tools they needed to preserve their cultures and traditions in the face of other forces of modernisation.[21]

Although the ABS generally avoided areas controlled by the British empire, by the early twentieth century its practice of supplying American missionaries with scriptures wherever they operated meant that the ABS was effectively supplying bibles in Korea, Japan, China, Central and South America and Persia, as well as several eastern Mediterranean countries. ABS incursions were facilitated by an 1860 agreement permitting either society to print editions financed by the other, provided that no changes were made to the text. Because the two societies maintained conflicting policies around prices, discounts, colporteur wages and methods, however, these incursions often led to confusion among indigenous workers and conflict between society agents. To remedy some of these problems, a joint conference was held at London Bible House in 1910 and a Committee of Counsel was established consisting of three representatives from each society. In the following years the ABS agreed to cede Korea and Persia to the BFBS in exchange for the Philippines and Central America. Geographical boundaries within China, Brazil and Japan were also formalised to avoid duplication. And in 1911 the ABS made its first attempt to begin printing bibles in Braille – a laborious process that resulted

[21] Batalden, 'Introduction', p. 12; Lacy, *Word Carrying Giant*, p. 251; Ndung'u Nahashon, 'The Role of the Bible in the Rise of African Instituted Churches: The Case of the Akurinu Churches in Kenya', in West and Dube (eds.), *The Bible in Africa*, pp. 236–47.

in nearly fifty volumes for each Bible and required as long as an entire year to simply set the type.[22]

In March 1919 the ABS, still the smaller of the two organisations, proposed to form with the BFBS, the National Bible Society of Scotland, the Netherlands Bible Society and others a 'World Federation of National Bible Societies'. Wary of the growing influence of the ABS and not wishing to cede any of its autonomy, however, the BFBS rejected the idea on the grounds that it had always functioned as a worldwide agency. At the same time it realised that its scope of operations had been reduced not only by earlier agreements with the ABS, but also by factors well beyond its control. The First World War put a temporary stop to the BFBS's operations in much of Europe while the Russian Revolution more permanently eliminated its massive circulation in Eurasia. Just when it seemed that the BFBS was being forced to shut down many of its foreign operations, the ABS was raising funds for what soon evolved into the single largest bible production and distribution project in its history: the provision of a million pocket-sized New Testaments free of charge to every soldier and sailor in the American military. Because of the scope of this project, the ABS was obliged to make use not only of its own presses, operating sixteen hours a day, but also those belonging to a number of commercial publishers. By 1918 the ABS had expanded its production capacity and provided more than seven million New Testaments to American and foreign servicemen, through military chaplains, at a cost of nearly a quarter of a million dollars. The ability of the ABS to produce this many books in a relatively short space of time has been attributed to its willingness to abandon administrative structures, including the use of auxiliaries as fundraising mechanisms, and to experiment with more efficient approaches. By 1927, for example, the use of auxiliaries had all but disappeared in America, while direct-mail campaigns accounted for 85 per cent of the ABS's total revenue. It took the BFBS and other European societies another fifty years and several financial crises to adapt their own fundraising structures in a similar way.[23]

In 1932, the same year that a Japanese attack on China destroyed a large cache of ABS stock and printing equipment in Shanghai, delegates from the ABS, the BFBS and the National Bible Society of Scotland met in London to coordinate further their overlapping activities in South America, Eastern Europe,

[22] Batalden, 'Introduction', p. 6; John Dean, 'London Bible House in the 1950s: An Illustrated Reminiscence', in Batalden et al. (eds.), *Sowing the Word*, p. 83; Lacy, *Word Carrying Giant*, pp. 115, 160, 170, 191; Robertson, *Taking the Word*, p. 3; Steer, *Good News for the World*, pp. 324, 342.

[23] Batalden, 'Introduction', pp. 6–7; Lacy, *Word Carrying Giant*, pp. 155, 162, 168; Robertson, *Taking the Word*, pp. 222–6; Steer, *Good News for the World*, pp. 306, 342–3, 441.

parts of Asia and the Middle East. This inter-society meeting, the most productive to date, simultaneously pointed towards the century's two dominant themes by focusing on the devolution of responsibilities to emergent national bible societies, while also opening more serious discussion around the establishment of a world federation of bible societies to coordinate global production and distribution. Many of the principles articulated here influenced efforts at cooperation for decades to come. Most important among these was that new societies should be indigenous, with roots in the life of both church and nation. Furthermore, in principle, cooperation across national borders would be facilitated by an international pooling of resources. On a practical level, the conference led to the elimination of much competition through the establishment of several joint agencies in the West Indies, the Middle East and parts of South America. Decision making rested with a designated 'primary' society in each region, often the BFBS, while other societies made regular financial contributions and took proportional credit for distribution on that basis. Cooperation of this sort also helped to bring about the standardisation of many disparate and confusing policies with respect to publication methods, prices, local auxiliaries and free distribution. Further cooperation was achieved in the next several years when the ABS and BFBS together opened China Bible House and, at the urging of the ABS, officially divided their work in much of the Middle East.[24]

Just six weeks before the outbreak of the Second World War the ABS, the BFBS and bible societies from Scotland, France and Norway gathered in Woudschoten in Holland to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Netherlands Bible Society and to plan for the establishment of a 'World Council of Bible Societies'. For the first time in an inter-society context, delegates also discussed a significant change in policy: the question of what their organisations should do not only to put the Bible into people's hands, but also to work with local churches to encourage its use. Many foresaw that this new direction could have significant implications for the long-standing policy of publishing bibles strictly 'without note or comment' in an increasingly secular society. Although little was settled at the meeting, these discussions marked an important turning point that would lead to closer relations with Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches and open new avenues for indigenisation. For the time being, however, a global federation and changes in central policies would

[24] Benson and McMillan, *To the Ends of the Earth*, p. 72; Lacy, *Word Carrying Giant*, pp. 191, 216, 232, 270–5, 324; Robertson, *Taking the Word*, p. 128.

have to wait until the world came to terms with Hitler's invasion of Poland in September 1939.[25]

The impact of the Second World War on bible production and distribution was immediate and devastating. The BFBS once again found itself cut off from many of its foreign theatres of operation. Bibles on the European continent were routinely destroyed by bombs, riots and deliberate acts of governments. Such destruction only compounded earlier setbacks when Spain closed all its bible depots and the Italians drove the BFBS from Ethiopia even before Britain had declared war. Later, the German government began encouraging people to donate their bibles to waste-paper drives (though several officials were persuaded to spare eighteen tons of plates when bible societies promised to move them from German-occupied Austria to Geneva). The Polish Bible House was demolished in the 1944 Warsaw uprising. Thousands of bibles and presses were also destroyed in Bulgaria. In order to prevent similar devastation in Asia, the ABS and the BFBS moved quickly to transfer ownership of all their stock, presses and plates in Korea and Japan to the respective national bible societies. Many Europeans, cut off from the BFBS, turned to the ABS for help, just as they had some twenty-five years earlier. At least until 1941, when the United States entered the conflict, the ABS was able not only to meet these requests but also to increase the supply of scriptures to many of its own foreign agencies, particularly those operating in the Middle East. By 1945 the ABS had also distributed 455,251 complete bibles, 4,407,005 New Testaments and 2,558,384 Gospels to its own service personnel free of charge. Importantly, these figures included Douay New Testaments for Roman Catholics and Old Testaments for Jews.[26]

Perhaps the most important development to take place during the war years was the establishment of the Ecumenical Commission for the Chaplaincy Service to Prisoners of War under the auspices of the nascent World Council of Churches in Geneva. One of the primary responsibilities of this agency was to maintain contact with bible societies throughout Europe and aid them in distributing bibles. By 1945 the Geneva agency had succeeded in distributing, in cooperation with other bible societies, 84,158 complete bibles, 154,836 New Testaments and 213,535 Gospels to prisoners of war and civilians. These figures, though small when set next to those of the ABS, are nevertheless impressive

[25] Benson and McMillan, *To the Ends of the Earth*, p. 72; Lacy, *Word Carrying Giant*, pp. 276–7; Robertson, *Taking the Word*, pp. 60–1; Steer, *Good News for the World*, p. 397.

[26] Sue Jackson, 'The Bible in Spain and Gibraltar', in Batalden et al. (eds.), *Sowing the Word*, p. 314; Lacy, *Word Carrying Giant*, pp. 160, 164–5, 202, 216–17, 241; Robertson, *Taking the Word*, p. 28; Steer, *Good News for the World*, pp. 296, 352, 433, 409.

when one considers the enormous logistical difficulties the Geneva agency faced. In the year following the cessation of hostilities, demand increased further when churches in Japan and Germany requested nearly three million copies of the Scriptures to replace those that had been lost or destroyed during the conflict. It was clear that no single society would be able to meet a need that large.[27]

In May 1946 delegates from societies in thirteen countries – Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Britain, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States – as well as the World Council of Churches, answered a joint call from the BFBS and the ABS to meet in Haywards Heath in England to resume the conversation about inter-society cooperation that had begun in Woudschoten before the war. Of these thirteen, only four societies – the BFBS, the ABS, the Netherlands Bible Society and the National Bible Society of Scotland – had already developed infrastructures for distributing bibles beyond their own national borders. The BFBS remained the most cautious participant. In spite of the fact that its operations had suffered the most significant reversals in the previous six years, it still retained the most extensive foreign operations, and many BFBS leaders believed that they had the most to lose should an international federation develop into a 'super' society with direct authority over member organisations. It was partly for this reason that John Temple, one of the general secretaries of the BFBS, became not only the first general secretary of the United Bible Societies (UBS), but simultaneously maintained his BFBS portfolio and his office at London Bible House. Distribution policies and practices that had helped to define the BFBS (and later the ABS) were also carried forward in the UBS, including the use of colporteurs, establishing the price of bibles based on the ability of purchasers to pay, avoiding the use of notes and comments, and refraining from producing and distributing bibles containing the Apocrypha. Just as importantly, the UBS would not compete with member societies in the solicitation of funds or infringe on their freedom to work within their respective countries. Finally, no UBS decision would be binding on any one member bible society without its express consent. All of these concessions helped to convince the BFBS to undertake the risks of participation, and in July six societies approved draft statutes, thereby officially bringing the UBS into existence.[28]

[27] Benson and McMillan, *To the Ends of the Earth*, p. 73; Lacy, *Word Carrying Giant*, pp. 165–6, 202, 241; Steer, *Good News for the World*, p. 342.

[28] Benson and McMillan, *To the Ends of the Earth*, pp. 71–3; Lacy, *Word Carrying Giant*, pp. 279–80; Robertson, *Taking the Word*, pp. 7, 26–9; Steer, *Good News for the World*, pp. 367–72.

BFBS confidence in the nascent UBS was temporarily shaken when Temple died just over two years later. Many within the BFBS wished to see him replaced with another secretary drawn from their own ranks, and it was only reluctantly that they eventually agreed to the appointment of Olivier Béguin as the new UBS general secretary. Born in Switzerland in 1914 and fluent in French, English and German, Béguin had been responsible for coordinating bible distribution through the Geneva agency throughout the Second World War. Still a young man when appointed, Béguin served as the general secretary of the UBS until his death in 1972, and was considered throughout those years to be a farsighted administrator with no overweening sense of Western superiority. These attributes would soon prove essential in a world that was on the verge of entering a post-colonial phase that would demand a serious and sustained effort on the part of all bible societies to indigenise their work across the globe.[29]

At the end of the Second World War colonial powers still controlled all of Africa south of the Sahara except for Liberia and South Africa. But by 1965 only Angola and Mozambique remained under direct colonial rule. Literacy and population levels in parts of Africa and many regions around the world were also rising at unprecedented rates. In light of these developments the UBS, largely at the urging of the ABS, began to place a growing emphasis on the need to work with local churches and believers to produce and distribute bibles in South America, Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa. And because the majority of Christians in several of these regions belonged to the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, bible societies found themselves obliged to compromise on several of their most entrenched policies. Olivier Béguin in particular understood that colonial independence and communism would require decentralised production and distribution models that were not derived from Western practice. This conviction flowed in part from his work supplying scriptures, printing equipment and technical aid to representatives of the Orthodox churches in several Eastern European countries after the Second World War. For its part, the BFBS took a decidedly more conservative approach by maintaining centralised production in London Bible House throughout the 1950s while attempting to revive its own languishing fundraising auxiliaries. In 1957, however, one year after it had been forced to transfer all of its Arab operations to the ABS as a result of the Suez War, the BFBS entered a severe financial crisis. With nowhere else to turn, it accepted help from the ABS to pay its bills for paper, presswork, binding and transport and agreed to regular annual

[29] Robertson, *Taking the Word*, pp. 37, 155; Steer, *Good News for the World*, p. 378.

meetings at which the two societies thenceforth made decisions jointly about international funding priorities. The ABS also assumed more authority over operations in parts of Africa, India and Europe.[30]

Meanwhile, Béguin and the UBS, in the face of a rapidly expanding world population and churches that were failing to attract new members at a proportionate rate, attempted to find new ways to focus attention on indigenising bible society work across a wide spectrum of activities. These included the ongoing decentralisation of production, fostering local leadership and the emergence of independent bible societies, varying formats to suit local cultural and religious conventions, working with local churches to develop distribution networks of volunteers that slowly supplanted paid colporteurs, refraining from any activities which host governments deemed illegal, altering policies that prohibited the distribution of the Apocrypha, and reopening discussion around ways in which the spirit of the policy barring 'notes and comments' might best be carried forward in a way not incompatible with the imperatives of ecumenism. These developments occurred only incrementally at first. Even the ABS had to proceed with caution since many evangelical Americans, their main source of funding, were suspicious of the ecumenical movement and of Roman Catholics – to say nothing of an even greater unease about working with communist governments to arrange for the legal production or importation of bibles into China and Eastern Europe.[31]

Whatever the obstacles, the UBS, whose agenda had become increasingly close to that of the ABS, was prepared to make several structural changes that would afford local bible societies greater autonomy. In 1954 the category of UBS associate member was introduced, to accommodate those societies in many developing countries that did not have sufficient support from local churches to engage in major financial and distribution campaigns without foreign aid. By the mid-1960s the ABS and the BFBS had formally agreed to share the responsibilities and costs of all bible work worldwide in the context of an overall UBS global strategy. At the same time, the UBS was beginning to move production facilities out of Europe and North America as part of its first global distribution campaign centred in Africa and Asia: 'God's Word for a New Age'. In this context members of African bible societies meeting in Limuru near Nairobi in 1963 insisted, for the first time, that bible work in Africa must become a matter for African churches and that ABS methods

[30] Benson and McMillan, *To the Ends of the Earth*, p. 114; Dean, 'London Bible House', pp. 86–7; Lacy, *Word Carrying Giant*, pp. 218–19; Robertson, *Taking the Word*, pp. 42, 124, 210, 232; Steer, *Good News for the World*, p. 286.

[31] Robertson, *Taking the Word*, pp. 45, 198.

should be introduced to further distribution on the continent. That meant placing a greater emphasis on formal programmes to train African Christians in both scripture distribution and evangelisation. Ten years earlier the ABS had established a school for bible distributors in Mexico City known as the 'Penzotti Institute' that had since become a model for training colporteurs, ministers, missionaries and – most importantly – local volunteers. Institutes and workshops like these soon spread elsewhere and helped to facilitate an incremental transition that was taking place – from the use of paid colporteurs to the recruitment of local volunteers. These people stored scriptures at their homes or places of business and eventually sold them for the same price they had paid to local bible societies. More profound structural changes that were needed to systematise indigenisation at the level of UBS policy and administration, however, did not finally emerge until the sesquicentennial year of the ABS in 1966.[32]

That year the UBS Council, meeting in Buck Hill Falls, Pennsylvania, established a new regional structure that effectively transformed the UBS from a forum for consultation into one where major administrative responsibilities were delegated through a network of regional and global committees intended to give each of four new regions embracing Africa, the Americas, Asia-Pacific and Europe (which also included the Middle East) enough flexibility to meet local demands in culturally sensitive ways. The ABS was enthusiastic about this change, having recently reorganised its own domestic operations into three regional centres. It had, moreover, long been advocating for local churches and bible societies beyond the American borders to take a greater share in the responsibility of producing and distributing bibles. The new structure soon resulted in a proliferation of local autonomous bible societies, operating as members or associate members of the UBS. As promising as the new regional approach appeared to be, however, delegates realised that, without access to adequate resources, local committees would be largely symbolic. Consequently a World Service Budget was also established with an eye to placing all member bible societies on an equal footing while simultaneously ending the annual joint ABS/BFBS meetings where funds had previously been allocated for foreign work. All societies were expected eventually to begin making contributions to the World Service Budget though some, it was recognised, would be net-contributing while others would be net-supported. The ABS was

[32] Benson and McMillan, *To the Ends of the Earth*, p. 117; Dean, 'London Bible House', p. 87; Lacy, *Word Carrying Giant*, pp. 176–208; Robertson, *Taking the Word*, pp. 93–5, 175, 298; Steer, *Good News for the World*, pp. 393, 416.

by far the largest contributor, and both the World Service Budget Office and the UBS Scripture Supply Fund were located in New York. The BFBS and the ABS reacted very differently to these changes. The former retained many staff as general officers while allowing the same people to serve simultaneously in key UBS roles, whereas the latter did not permit concurrent appointments. As a result it was Americans who became responsible for most of the UBS's major initiatives into the 1990s. And although the BFBS became financially stable in the 1970s, it also moved in that same decade to disband its Overseas Committee entirely and renamed itself simply Bible Society to reflect its more exclusive focus on domestic bible distribution.[33]

Much of the indigenisation that took place in the decades following Buck Hill Falls would have been impossible without major changes that occurred in relations between the UBS and the Roman Catholic Church. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century Roman Catholics had made sporadic efforts to distribute bibles among the laity. One of the most organised of these efforts occurred when the Society of St Jerome received papal permission in 1903 to print on Vatican presses vernacular editions of the four Gospels and the book of Acts and to sell them as cheaply as possible to the laity in Italy. After the Society had succeeded in selling some half-million copies, plans were soon laid to print and distribute the rest of the New Testament. In 1907, however, the Pope addressed the Society and, although full of praise for its work, he advised that it limit its efforts to publishing the Gospels and Acts only. This effectively opened the door to distribution in Italy by Protestant bible societies that were, at the time, less concerned about indigenisation than about evangelisation. Although this project led to increased tensions, with the occasional eruption of violence directed against colporteurs operating in Catholic countries elsewhere, for the most part relations slowly improved as the decades passed. The ABS, for example, while attempting to assuage the suspicions of American evangelicals on one hand, and foster better relations with Roman Catholics at home and abroad on the other, achieved some important successes, particularly in Mexico where the Roman Catholic Church even sponsored a National Bible Day in 1962. In 1963 the UBS approached Cardinal Augustine Bea, a longtime veteran of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, to find ways to collaborate, and the two sides met informally the following year. Not coincidentally the ABS and the UBS adopted policies at that time recommending the publication and circulation of the Apocrypha where local conditions warranted.

[33] Lacy, *Word Carrying Giant*, p. 159; Robertson, *Taking the Word*, pp. 133, 171, 210, 298; Steer, *Good News for the World*, p. 396.

Two years later the BFBS reversed its own policy banning the Apocrypha. In 1966 the ABS informed the BFBS that, without an official change in policy, they were now allowing the publication of 'readers' helps' with their bibles. This further smoothed the way to joint operations with the Roman Catholic Church, which had always insisted on the necessity of providing Bible readers with clerical guidance. In 1971 the ABS and UBS moved simultaneously to amend the phrase 'without note or comment' to read 'without doctrinal note or comment' in their separate constitutions – thereby creating a space for the accommodation of Roman Catholic requirements while continuing to respect the spirit behind the original wording.[34]

For its part, the Roman Catholic Church, along with the many other reforms introduced during the Second Vatican Council, opened a new era in lay access to vernacular bibles in November 1965 with the promulgation of *Dei Verbum*, a document that not only encouraged 'easy access' to the Bible for 'all the Christian faithful' but also took the unprecedented step of sanctioning cooperation 'with the separated brethren'. This led, in June 1968, to the joint publication by the UBS and the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of a document titled 'Guiding Principles for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible' that provided for the inclusion of readers' helps as well as indices, concordances, maps and illustrations, provided that the original intention behind the 'without note or comment' principle – the avoidance of sectarian discord – was not violated.[35] That same year the Roman Catholic Church established the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate – now known as the Catholic Biblical Federation – for the purpose of encouraging lay reading of the Bible in vernacular languages. Finally, in 1969, the UBS formalised a set of principles designed to regulate the publication of the Apocrypha. These stipulated several compromises that the Roman Catholic Church was willing to accept, notably clauses specifying that the apocryphal books would appear as a separate section between the Old and New Testaments and that the additional cost of printing would be borne by the requesting local church. Most member societies of the UBS were willing

[34] Benson and McMillan, *To the Ends of the Earth*, p. 80; Lacy, *Word Carrying Giant*, pp. 177, 181, 202; John Pollard, *The Unknown Pope: Benedict XV (1914–1922) and the Pursuit of Peace* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999), p. 192; Robertson, *Taking the Word*, pp. 101, 112, 166; Steer, *Good News for the World*, pp. 394, 397–8.

[35] This left a smaller niche for commercial bible publishers and, as the trend to include more and more material progressed, the 'Application Bible' remained by 1996 the only genre of Bible the UBS refused to produce because it was thought that these bibles, in seeking to help readers apply a scriptural text to their daily lives, inevitably conveyed a set of prescribed conclusions.

to accept these reforms, though several notable exceptions did occur in South America. In most regions, however, the concessions led to increased cooperation with the Roman Catholic Church and, to a lesser extent, the Orthodox churches, not only in translation but also in production and distribution.[36]

Although the UBS remained particularly interested in fostering relations with the Orthodox churches as part of their wider programme to indigenise bible work, progress remained piecemeal and sporadic. At the first European Regional Conference held in Switzerland in 1967, for example, only a few Orthodox Christians attended, though this meeting had originally promised, through a pooling of resources and expertise, to increase bible distribution in Eastern Europe to levels unseen since before the Russian Revolution. Bible production and distribution in those regions fluctuated wildly, however, in the following two decades. These difficulties flowed in part from the emphasis Orthodox churches had learned to place on insularity during centuries of existence under Muslim and Marxist regimes. A further reason for limited ecumenical cooperation was that these churches had developed in specific national contexts as self-governing institutions without a single centre of control. This meant that bible societies were required to forge relationships with separate Orthodox churches in various countries – something that had not been necessary when building relations with Roman Catholics after the Second Vatican Council. As late as 1996 the UBS continued to hope that the same forces that had earlier led to widespread distribution of bibles among Roman Catholic laity might soon be at work to effect change in the Orthodox churches.[37]

Although vastly improved relations with the Roman Catholic Church and, more fitfully, the Orthodox churches helped to facilitate the indigenisation of bible society work, new cultural, political and religious challenges were emerging. The growing emphasis on bible use, for example, was designed not only to foster closer relations with local churches but also to curb what bible society leaders regarded as a disturbing trend towards both neglect and abuse of the Scriptures. In most of the developed world, where churches continued to lose members, the emphasis was placed on 'Bible Campaigns' and 'Bible Weeks' to both raise funds and stir interest in Bible studies administered by

[36] Benson and McMillan, *To the Ends of the Earth*, p. 80; Michael A. Hayes and Liam Gearon, *Contemporary Catholic Theology: A Reader* (New York: Continuum, 1999), p. 20; Robertson, *Taking the Word*, p. 240; Steer, *Good News for the World*, pp. 397, 420; Roger Steer, '"Without Note or Comment": Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow', in Batalden et al. (eds.), *Sowing the Word*, p. 77.

[37] Robertson, *Taking the Word*, pp. 194, 197, 312, 315.

local churches. The BFBS even hired a professional public relations firm to urge people to read the Bible. Elsewhere in the world problems arose from the fact that bibles were perceived as apotropaic objects that could ward off evil or confer power on the owner. Although such abuses also occurred in Europe, where, for example, Second World War servicemen occasionally accepted bibles in the belief that they would miraculously stop bullets, such problems tended to emerge with greater persistence in societies with strong magical traditions. In one particularly striking example, Haitian colporteurs reported a belief among some that misfortune would befall those who drank tea that had been made with water previously steeped in biblical passages containing curses. As long as the Bible remained in codex form these difficulties were likely to continue. Although the ABS issued the Bible on CD-ROM in the late 1980s, and the UBS began to show a growing interest in other electronic formats as early as 1991, widespread use of these new media had not been achieved by the beginning of the new millennium.[38]

Of the UBS's four major regions, Africa proved to be the most difficult one in which to carry forward the project of indigenisation. Few production facilities were established, and only a handful of qualified Africans were available to take on major posts in administration, distribution and church liaison activities. These limitations have been attributed to a variety of factors: the region's tremendous cultural and linguistic diversity, its perennially low levels of literacy, its rapidly expanding population, and an Islamic resurgence in the northern parts of the continent. Sometimes technology helped to assuage difficulties, as when, in 1957, the ABS introduced the use of a 'finger phono' for those unable to read for themselves. This small, hand-operated phonograph was distributed with small records that contained scripture selections and, while not suitable for listening to music because of the variability in playback speeds, could be used without batteries or electricity. By the 1980s, however, Africa remained the only UBS region that was not doing its own printing. Even in those instances where production was undertaken it was typically plagued by shortages of paper and difficulties with custom agents. African Bible Houses continued to be operated with the aid of outsiders until 1992. Throughout these decades, even in places where indigenisation had proceeded more smoothly, money remained a constant problem: local financial support was thin and African currencies were rarely exchangeable. By the

[38] Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 36–7; Robertson, *Taking the Word*, pp. 55, 303; William Smalley, *Translation as Mission: Bible Translation in the Modern Missionary Movement* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1991), p. 224; Steer, *Good News for the World*, p. 388.

late 1980s financial support had risen in all UBS regions by at least 65 per cent, whereas in Africa it had declined by almost the same amount. The result was that African bible societies continued to rely on the World Service Budget to supply the majority of their needs.[39]

In spite of the fact that Africa is home to a large number of Muslims, the UBS chose to address the difficulties inherent in carrying on bible work in countries dominated by Islam by establishing a new sub-region of Europe (embracing North Africa, West Asia and Turkey). In the 1980s a three-year UBS pilot project resulted in the production of a variety of scriptures using calligraphy, colours and designs intended to attract Muslim readers by appealing to cultural conventions. In spite of these modest innovations, however, the most difficult problem to emerge would not be so easily remedied: an endemic fear among local minority Christians that Muslims who expressed an interest in the Bible did so only with an eye to subverting the church.[40]

Bible work in China, meanwhile, faced a different set of obstacles throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Smuggling of scriptures into the country became the only alternative to a level of indigenisation that amounted to withdrawal. The UBS and associated bible societies were strongly opposed to operating contrary to the laws of any country, but some new evangelical organisations put distribution (or, as they saw it, salvation) ahead of respect for an atheist constitution. In 1949 the communist government closed mainland China to missionaries, and in response the ABS, BFBS and National Bible Society of Scotland were compelled to turn China Bible House over to Chinese leadership. Travel restrictions on colporteurs, disorganisation of the indigenous churches and the elimination of foreign funds all led to a dramatic decline in scripture distribution in the following few years. In 1955 several organisations began to export bibles illegally into China, most notably Open Doors International which, under the direction of a Dutch missionary known only by his pseudonym 'Brother Andrew', gained a reputation for regularly smuggling large numbers of bibles into both China and the Soviet Union. Bible work was dealt another major setback in China when the Cultural Revolution resulted in widespread bible burning beginning in 1966. In the following years, with no hope of legally exporting bibles into China, the UBS began broadcasting Bible readings across the border. Received mostly in secret, these broadcasts were delivered at a slow enough pace to allow listeners to copy out by hand entire books of the Bible. When they were declared a form of Western

[39] Lacy, *Word Carrying Giant*, p. 207; Robertson, *Taking the Word*, pp. 172–6, 241, 272.
[40] Robertson, *Taking the Word*, pp. 234, 310.

propaganda in the early 1980s, however, the broadcasts created difficulties between local churches and the Chinese government, and the UBS discontinued them and apologised to the authorities. Partly as a result of these events, although no bible society presses were operating in the country at that time, the Chinese government allowed 3 million bibles to be printed on state-run and state-supervised presses. Although this was a welcome innovation, the bibles themselves were so expensive that the UBS determined, if possible, to establish a legal press of their own in the interest of cutting costs. The government was receptive to the idea, and in January 1986 the UBS announced its plans to establish in Nanjing a bible press in cooperation with the Amity Foundation, a body established by local state-sanctioned Chinese churches.[41] Although the BFBS was only lukewarm to the idea, the project went ahead with financial contributions from European bible societies that, taken together, were second only to those of the ABS itself. In total some thirty-seven bible societies contributed $8 million to make this project the single largest capital expense to be undertaken by the UBS until that time. Printing equipment was imported from Germany, England, Sweden and Japan, and in October 1987 the first bible rolled off the press. By December 2000 the Nanjing Amity Printing Company had printed 25 million bibles, making it an unrivalled producer in the region. In the first decades of the new millennium the Amity Press not only remained the only state-authorised publisher of Christian literature in China, but had expanded to become the largest publisher of bibles anywhere in the world with the technical capacity to print as many as 12 million bibles annually (or twenty-three bibles every minute). Although Open Doors International and the Bible League continued to smuggle bibles into China for use in underground churches, Amity demonstrated that results could be achieved for the bible societies by the pursuit of policies that encouraged the legal indigenisation of production and distribution.[42]

By the late 1980s most bible societies, with the exception of those operating in Africa, were able to supply local churches and volunteer distributors with scriptures using their own production facilities. Unexpectedly, however, Europe again became a mission field in 1989 when the Berlin Wall fell and with it restrictions on bible production and distribution in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The resulting enormous demand obliged the

[41] Robertson, *Taking the Word*, p. 204.

[42] Batalden, 'Introduction', p. 7; Lacy, *Word Carrying Giant*, pp. 228, 235–6; Robertson, *Taking the Word*, pp. 201–4, 237, 322; Smalley, *Translation as Mission*, p. 222; Steer, *Good News for the World*, p. 404; Philip C. Stine, *Let the Word be Written: The Lasting Influence of Eugene A. Nida* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), pp. 135–6.

international bible society movement to cooperate with other scripture-distribution organisations, many of whose policies they found objectionable. But even before 1989 the UBS's policy of operating within local laws had enjoyed some success in Eastern Europe. In addition to increased supply in the USSR, Bulgaria and Romania, production had also been taking place in almost all Eastern European countries, often in cooperation with members of the Russian Orthodox Church. After 1989, however, in spite of the fact that UBS member societies were producing and distributing 500 million bibles, New Testaments, portions (at least one complete book of the Bible) and selections (less than a complete book of the Bible) on an annual basis, demand for Scriptures in Eastern Europe began to outstrip supply. The Orthodox churches, which were not unified in these countries and were not all equally open to cooperation with bible societies, were nevertheless regularly requesting prohibitively large shipments of books. When these requests could not all be answered by the UBS, other bible organisations soon stepped into the breach. In 1990 a meeting between the UBS and a number of these bodies took place in England to find new ways to work together to meet the massive demands of the former Soviet countries. Two years later the Forum of Bible Agencies was founded, to coordinate the UBS activities with those of more than a dozen other bible organisations. The vast majority of these were Protestant evangelical organisations, including Open Doors International, that did not share the same convictions with respect to operating legally and working towards the indigenisation of production and distribution facilities. Many, moreover, remained suspicious of Roman Catholicism and refused to print or distribute the Apocrypha. In spite of these differences, however, the Forum helped to eliminate duplication in a number of key areas and soon went on to establish its own regional agencies in Africa, North America, Latin America, Europe, Asia and the Pacific.[43]

Although the UBS and the Forum of Bible Agencies fostered collaborations in the production and distribution of popular editions of the Bible across denominational and national boundaries, a number of organisations committed to similar forms of bible work have chosen, or been obliged, to remain outside the currents of convergence. For some this insularity is rooted in much the same evangelical spirit that led the original founders of the BFBS to set themselves apart from the SPCK. For others, biblical heterodoxy has prevented interdenominational cooperation in production and distribution. Whether orthodox or heterodox, however, many of these movements share

[43] Robertson, *Taking the Word*, pp. 201, 220, 268, 301; Smalley, *Translation as Mission*, p. 221.

a millenarian outlook that predicates the inauguration of the Messianic Age on their efforts to distribute the Scriptures – and thereby the Gospel – to the entire world.[44]

With financial resources to match those of any individual national bible society, the Gideons International has independently developed so successful an infrastructure for raising funds and distributing scriptures that its worldwide impact is rivalled only by the UBS. By the end of 1995 the Gideons were distributing annually more than fifty million scriptures (the vast majority comprising complete bibles and New Testaments) in seventy-seven languages through members operating in some 170 countries. Initially founded in Wisconsin as a fellowship for travelling evangelical businessmen in 1899, the Gideons began to distribute bibles in 1908. Although they obtained initial supplies of scriptures from the ABS, relations became strained when the latter refused to include prefatory materials that the Gideons deemed essential for those lacking a basic understanding of the tenets of Protestant evangelicalism. Laborious workarounds soon proved impracticable, and in 1910 the Gideons turned to Thomas Nelson & Sons of New York. That relationship persisted throughout the next quarter-century until a concern arose that the commercial presses used for printing bibles one day might be used to produce questionable or even obscene materials the next. To avoid guilt by association, in 1936 the Gideons turned to the National Bible Press of Philadelphia which, apart from bibles, had confined itself largely to the production of encyclopaedias and textbooks since its establishment in 1863. Seventy years later the National Bible Press continues to be the primary supplier of Gideon bibles in eleven languages for distribution in North America and overseas. For scriptures in additional languages the Gideons typically rely on national bible societies operating under the aegis of the UBS or establish their own independent printing houses.[45]

Unlike the UBS, and occasionally to its irritation, the Gideons make a practice of giving away scriptures free of charge to students, members of the military and medical professionals. The Gideons are best known, however, for placing millions of bibles in what they refer to as 'human traffic lanes': hotels, hospitals and prisons. Whether directly to individuals or through placement in organisations, all distribution is carried on by members in good standing of the Gideons International only – identifiable to one another by an

[44] Andrew Holden, *Jehovah's Witnesses: Portrait of a Contemporary Religious Movement* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 82.

[45] Henderson, *Sowers of the Word*, pp. 100–1, 109, 117, 439, 451; Thomson, *Gideons*, pp. 26–7.

inconspicuous lapel pin displaying the well-known image of the two-handled Gideon amphora. Their dedication to scripture distribution has earned them not only a good number of converts to evangelical Christianity, but also numerous references in popular culture from the Beatles' 1968 song 'Rocky Raccoon' to the 1996 film *Mission: Impossible* starring Tom Cruise. Unlike the BFBS and the ABS, which in their earliest years made deliberate efforts to cooperate across denominational boundaries and even to accommodate Roman Catholics by printing the Apocrypha, however, the insularity of the Gideons is guaranteed by a constitution which not only forbids affiliation with other organisations carrying out similar work but also prohibits Roman Catholics, members of the Orthodox churches, Seventh-Day Adventists, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists and Unitarians from either joining the Gideons or offering them any financial assistance. Members of the clergy of all denominations are similarly excluded from membership. The Gideons have, however, been eager to distribute bibles to members of all churches, most notably by supplying New Testaments (since they will not distribute the Apocrypha) to Roman Catholic schoolchildren and by placing copies of the Bible next to the Book of Mormon in Marriott hotels worldwide.[46]

Like the Gideons, both the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (the Mormons) and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (the Jehovah's Witnesses) have demonstrated an equally independent commitment to producing and distributing popular editions of the Bible on a global scale. Unlike the Gideons, however, these 'new church' movements reject several core Christian doctrines and assert that Christianity stands in need of a primordial restoration – a restoration that can be obtained only through a proper understanding of the Bible as an inerrant sacred text in its original form. The Mormons add to the Bible three additional scriptures: the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price and the Doctrine and Covenants. The first of these is accorded a special place even among Mormon Scriptures, and by the final decade of the twentieth century various branches of the Latter-Day Saints had distributed nearly forty million copies in some seventy languages worldwide. After Joseph Smith, the founder of the Latter-Day Saints, published the Book of Mormon in 1830, he began an extensive revision of the King James Version that remained unfinished at the time of his murder in 1844. Some of these revisions appeared in the Pearl of Great Price in 1851 while others remained

[46] Henderson, *Sowers of the Word*, pp. 98, 177, 413–14; Robertson, *Taking the Word*, p. 220; Thomson, *Gideons*, pp. 44, 54; Peter Williams, *America's Religions* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. 237.

unpublished in Smith's manuscript notes. Between 1867 and 1868 a branch of Mormons known as the Reorganised Church, which had access to Smith's original manuscripts, published a version that incorporated Smith's more than three thousand changes to the King James Bible. Other branches of Mormons, however, remained wary of the new edition on the grounds that they were unable to examine the original manuscripts to verify that no emendations unauthorised by Smith had been introduced. These suspicions helped to raise the King James Version to quasi-official status, allowing most Mormons to continue in their practice of obtaining copies of the Bible from the ABS. Mormons continued to use standard editions of the King James Version throughout the twentieth century until 1979 when the Latter-Day Saints published, through Cambridge University Press, their own edition of the Bible. Employing the King James Version of the text, this edition also included thousands of cross-references to the other Mormon Scriptures, chapter headings that reflected Latter-Day Saint theology and excerpts from Smith's post-1830 revisions. This edition's popularity among Latter-Day Saints has had the unintended effect of severing the majority of Mormons from the wider market for bibles supplied by other commercial publishers and bible societies.[47]

A similar if somewhat more pronounced trend in progressive isolation has also taken place among Jehovah's Witnesses. This is not surprising when one considers the extent to which the Witnesses draw clear boundaries between themselves and the rest of the world, refusing to vote, serve in the military forces, or acknowledge as legitimate other branches of Christianity. In spite of the fact that the Jehovah's Witnesses acknowledge the Bible as the ultimate source of authority and are in complete agreement with the majority of Protestant Christians on its form and content, their reluctance to form commercial relationships with people outside their own movement compelled them to establish massive denominational printing houses operated by their own members. Until it was relocated to Wallkill, New York, in the first few years of the new millennium, the largest of these printing plants was located in Brooklyn Heights. In addition to several cavernous buildings dedicated to printing, the location also housed most plant workers in on-site residences. Before the end of the Second World War the Witnesses began using these facilities to print their own bibles, in part to eliminate the need to accept

[47] Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible*, pp. 16–21, 46–51, 69, 153, 177, 205–13; George Chryssides, *Exploring New Religions* (London: Cassell, 1999), pp. 94, 182; Kent P. Jackson, 'The Sacred Literature of the Latter-Day Saints', in Frerichs (ed.), *The Bible and Bibles*, pp. 167, 179; Lacy, *Word Carrying Giant*, p. 157.

scriptures from churches and societies they deemed to be part of 'Babylon the Great'.[48]

In 1950, in an effort to purge the Bible of the many transmission and translation errors believed to have crept in over the centuries, the Witnesses set out to prepare their own English-language version. The result, the New World Translation, was published in 1961 and has since been translated (from English, not the original languages) into Dutch, French, Italian, German, Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish. Although widely criticised, the worldwide printing infrastructure of the Witnesses has guaranteed it an extremely widespread distribution both in the United States and abroad. As the Witnesses began to expand more rapidly in regions outside America, many branch offices also established their own printing facilities. This expansion proved critical when, by the late twentieth century, the developing world was supplying most of the money needed to keep the movement's presses in operation even in the United States. One explanation for this shift might be the Witnesses' tenacious insistence on maintaining a door-to-door method of proselytising – a method particularly effective in developing countries where mainstream bible societies have been at work for centuries encouraging personal engagement with the printed Scriptures.[49]

The Witnesses are not alone in continuing to place great emphasis on the production and distribution of scriptures in the conventional codex form. While the original founders of the BFBS may have regarded the advent of stereotype as providential in lowering production costs and allowing them to flood the world with cheap bibles, their late twentieth-century counterparts have been less inclined to view the Internet and other electronic technologies in a similar way. Although the Bible was one of the first books to be added to many online textual archives, bible societies, denominational presses and commercial publishers have all continued to devote their considerable resources to ensuring that popular editions of the Bible remain synonymous with printed editions of the Bible. Logistical challenges inherent in working with physical objects – printed scriptures – have simultaneously helped to guarantee that bible societies continue to seek new ways to collaborate across denominational lines and to work with local governments and churches to successfully indigenise the work of production and distribution. For many readers

[48] Chryssides, *New Religions*, p. 101; Holden, *Jehovah's Witnesses*, pp. 20, 45; M. James Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, new edn. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 172, 221.

[49] Heather Botting et al., *The Orwellian World of the Jehovah's Witnesses* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 183; Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed*, pp. 173, 332–3.

the notion of a Bible wholly divorced from paper and ink is possibly still too radical, even too Gnostic, to fully embrace. Perhaps the contrast between traditional and new media is nowhere more apparent than in hotel rooms. When the Gideons began to supply bibles to hotels in the first decade of the twentieth century, such accommodations afforded few other distractions. A century later it is not uncommon to find rooms equipped with multimedia entertainment centres, satellite televisions, in-room movies, video games and wireless networks. A closely printed Gideon Bible tucked away in a nightstand drawer seems an austere thing by comparison. Yet the Gideons report that the average lifespan of a hotel bible is only six years.[50] And stories persist in their literature describing the way in which people continue to be profoundly affected by the mere physical presence of a bible in their hotel rooms.[51] What, then, constitutes a truly popular edition of the Bible in the first decade of the twenty-first century? As in the eighteenth century, the answer to this question is shaped by the agency of evangelising organisations that offer books at affordable prices in attractive formats. Beyond that continuity, however, it increasingly depends on a reader's nationality, ethnicity, language, age, cultural practices, religious and denominational affiliation, literacy level and even ability to see. In the vast majority of cases, however, it does not yet depend on his or her ability to access computer technology or the Internet.

[50] Henderson, *Sowers of the Word*, pp. 98, 114.
[51] Thomson, *Gideons*, p. 13; Henderson, *Sowers of the Word*, p. 399.

3

Translations of the Bible and the cultural impulse

LAMIN SANNEH

Introduction

In the period covered by this chapter the Bible was the major force in Protestant missions abroad, where two factors shaped its transmission and appropriation: the first was the development of the vernacular, and the second was the vernacular Bible's impact on colonised and protected populations. The process of vernacular translation led to the first systematic documentation of non-Western languages, and in that the role of missionaries was crucial, while the Bible's impact in the hands of local converts sparked the rise of new religious movements that are striking for their variety and for their commitment to indigenisation. Thanks to missionary agency, the study of non-Western languages could be launched on solid field foundations, while, at the same time, the indigenous ferment created new challenges and pressures for Christian unity. The reception of the Bible in the vernacular, however, sidestepped the controversies that accompanied the circulation of the Bible in early modern Europe; however unwittingly, it produced, instead, the movements of indigenisation and liberation.

Missionary awakening: Pietism and Bible translations

The invention of printing by William Caxton in 1474 produced in due course a multiplying effect on the production and distribution of Scripture in the Latin West, which spurred the work and importance of Bible translation generally. A few months after Martin Luther published his theses, a German bible printed by Sylman Ottmar appeared in 1518. Its pedigree goes back to about 1350 when a German translation was made, though it was published only in 1466 by Johann Mentelin at Strasburg. In the next fifty years or so thirteen further editions followed, but with the limitation that they were translations

made from the Vulgate of Jerome, rather than from the original texts. The translations were a reminder that whatever the language in question, the Christian Scriptures are invested in tongues that existed for purposes other than those related to Christianity. The alternative of the religion shut up in the language in which Jesus preached, taught and worshipped had never been available, or even been mandated by Jesus or by the apostles, so that Christianity is encountered only and always in a translated and, therefore, in a comprehensible form, with interpretation its handmaid. Johann Eck, a Catholic scholar, commented on a German translation of Scripture done before Luther by complaining that the translator in that case 'tried too hard to translate word for word into German, so that he often became impossible to understand, and the simple reader can make no sense of it'.[1] Typically, the languages of translation, worship and prayer had been the languages of pagans, Greek and Latin included. Christians could not forget or resist the language and Gentile bias of the Gospel. Luther's objections to the translations of his day were that they were not based on original texts, and, equally crucially, did not adopt a form of German that was readily comprehensible to all; with that Luther challenged the church to return to its Pentecostal, Gentile roots. Luther's idea was not a revolutionary concept, but, given the calcification of contemporary institutional religious life, and the corresponding insecurity of religious leaders, the idea caused shock waves.

In the early stages, printing the editions of the Bible had only limited scope; Gutenberg and Schöffler, for example, could not have made more than about 200 impressions from each single setting. The prices of such imprints were too high to dispense with the need for copying the printed pattern by hand – for example, Zwingli copied by hand the Greek New Testament of Erasmus' edition at the Stadtbibliothek of Zurich. Surprisingly, in the first two centuries of the Reformation the circulation of printed copies of the Bible remained relatively small. In the heady period between 1500 and 1520, for example, there were only fifty-six Latin printings, seventeen in German, ten in Italian and four in French.

Although the Reformation is accepted as an important impetus in vernacular Bible translation, it also drew on the growing confidence in the vernacular cause that was well established by the early sixteenth century. By that stage, surviving the censorship of an earlier era, Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio had acquired a solid following among those who considered them models worthy

[1] S. L. Greenslade (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible: From the Reformation to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963; repr. 1975), vol. III, p. 104.

of standing beside the Greek and Latin classics.[2] Chaucer wrote his treatise on the Astrolabe for 'litel Lowis my sone, under ful lighte rewles and naked wordes in English', because 'Latin ne canstow yit but small, my lyte sone'.[3] Purvey, a disciple of Wycliffe, translated Luke's Gospel 'for the poor men of his nation which con little Latin or none, and be poor of wit and of worldly chattels and nevertheless rich of good will to please God'.[4] Thus was planted the idea that, alongside the standard classics, vernacular languages deserved to be accorded an equal status in education and religion even though, with the possible exception of the Dominicans in the Middle East and Franciscan missionaries in China, most Europeans at the time had not given much thought to non-Western vernaculars.[5] Centuries later Voltaire admitted as much when he said that he was made aware of China's importance thanks to the work of the Jesuits there.

In time, however, the vernacular impetus spread to the New World, where in 1663 the Cambridge-educated English Puritan John Eliot produced a historic translation of the Bible into Massachusett, the language of the Native Indian tribe of New England. He followed it in 1666 with the publication of a comprehensive grammar of the language. Before King Philip's War of 1675–6 that almost decimated the Native American population, Eliot's Bible stimulated the spread of literacy, leading to the production of the Psalter in 1709. It was the last effort at supporting indigenous literacy before the Native people were absorbed into the colonial population.

By the early eighteenth century, however, improvements in technology began to have a telling effect and, accordingly, the Bible acquired mass and range. For the first time in this period and coinciding with the ascendancy of the West, the Bible in the vernacular began to be produced in large numbers. Thus could Baron Freiherr von Canstein (d. 1719) boast that at Halle between 1710 and 1719 he produced 100,000 copies of the New Testament in 28 editions, and 40,000 Bibles in 16 editions. It was no accident that Halle in Germany was the centre of the Pietist awakening and its related missionary outreach to British India, among other places.

[2] Paul Ellingworth, 'From Martin Luther to the English Revised Version', in Noss (ed.), *A History of Bible Translation*, p. 108.
[3] Cited in Smith, *The Shrine*, p. 70.
[4] Cited in Smith, *The Shrine*, p. 71.
[5] Henry Yule and Henri Codier (eds.), *Cathay and the Way Thither*, 4 vols., rev. edn. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1913–16). Also Lauren Arnold, *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures: The Franciscan Mission to China and its Influence on the Art of the West, 1250–1350* (San Francisco: Desiderata Press, 1999).

The earliest of the German missionaries to the Indian subcontinent were pioneers of Bible translation in the South Indian languages. Bartholomew Ziegenbalg was the first German Lutheran missionary to arrive in India, publishing a Tamil New Testament in 1714. He was followed by others, including Benjamin Schultz (1689–1760), Johann Philip Fabricius (1711–91) and Christoph Samuel John (1747–1813). Arriving in Tranquebar in September 1719, Schultz undertook Scripture translations into Telugu and Tamil, and for the purpose produced in 1723 the first Telugu dictionary and a hymnbook. He completed a translation of the whole Bible in 1735. At his new station in Madras (now Chennai), where he transferred his missionary work in 1726, Schultz established the missionary work of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in India. In 1728 he produced a Telugu grammar in Latin, with samples of Scripture added in an appendix as exercise passages.[6]

For his part, Fabricius embarked on a project to unite different competing interests in the production of the Tamil Bible, drawing on the work of Schultz for that purpose. The work of revision of Schultz's Tamil Bible was finally completed in 1796, five years after the death of Fabricius. In the changed circumstances of British ascendancy, the Madras Bible Society was formed, and one of its first actions was to direct the suppression of Fabricius' German edition and its replacement with the Bower English edition of 1871 – it marked, sadly, the end of the decades-long Anglican–Lutheran co-operation in the mission field.[7] Among other notable missionary linguists were Henry Martyn, who arrived in Serampore in 1806 and worked in Persian and Urdu. His translation of the New Testament in Urdu was published in India. Adoniram Judson of the United States undertook translation work in Burma, and his work was incorporated in the final version of the Bible published in 1834.

It may be observed that Catholic missionary translation work preceded Protestant work in Tranquebar. In consequence, the SPCK reprinted the New Testament in Portuguese, which was spoken in Tranquebar. The translation was done by Father Joao Ferreira d'Almeida in Batavia, where he moved in 1651. A version of the Old Testament translated into Portuguese by Jacobus op den Akker was printed in two volumes in Batavia in the period 1748–53. Revised in 1959, this version has been in wide use in Portugal, Brazil and East

[6] Adapa Satyanarayana, 'The Contribution of Benjamin Schultz to Telegu Language and Learning', in Andreas Gross, Y. Vincent Kumaradoss and Heike Liebau (eds.), *Halle and the Beginning of Protestant Christianity in India*, 3 vols. (Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen, 2006), vol. III: *Communication between India and Europe*. pp. 1163–80.

[7] Rekha Kamath Rajan, 'Johann Philipp Fabricius and the History of the Tamil Bible', in Gross et al. (eds.), *Halle*, vol. III, pp. 1299–1307, esp. pp. 1304–5.

Timor. With the impetus of the Bible Society of Java (or Batavia), which was founded in 1816, Portuguese in time gave way to Malay in Bible translation. Hillebrand Cornelius Klinkert, a Dutch Mennonite missionary, translated the New Testament into Javanese in 1863, and the whole Bible in 1879. It was not until well into the twentieth century that Catholic translation work in Indonesia picked up pace, in this instance in collaboration with Protestants. In the Philippines the Spanish missionary Manuel Alonso Lavalle translated the Gospel of Luke into the Pangasinian language. Published in 1888, the translation was banned by the Spanish authorities. The ban, however, was lifted in 1889 when the Americans wrested control from the Spanish. The Tagalog language was also used in translation.

The linguistic work of Christian Friedrich Schwartz (d. 1798) belongs to the distinguished line of Bible translators in South India. Ordained in 1749 in Copenhagen, Schwartz travelled to London to establish contact with German Lutheran pastors serving in the city, all of them with connections to Halle. Schwartz was also acquainted with George Whitefield, a key pillar of the transatlantic Great Awakening. Schwartz arrived in Tranquebar in June 1750 to open a brilliant career of linguistic and educational work. In the schools he founded he established a curriculum in which biblical and other Christian texts were expounded with the help of the principles and sciences of the Western Enlightenment, showing how Bible translation was a channel for cultural transmission as well.

One of Schwartz's most distinguished disciples was Vedanayakam (Pillai) Sastriar (1773–1864), who made lasting contributions to Tamil language and literature, including hymnody. In a work of his, the *Bethlehem Kurvanchee*, the Gospel story is presented in the bejewelled medium of Tamil verse, utilising Tamil modes of tunes, tones and tempos. It is an example of the transposition of the Gospel story into the forms of Tamil imagination, piety and spirituality. The corpus of his writing 'is astonishing, not only for its volume, but for its depth, range and subtlety. . . . The range of modern and scientific subjects on which he wrote – astronomical, geographical, biological . . . is truly remarkable'.[8] His literary gifts were recognised by his appointment as court poet-laureate by the Maharajah of Tanjavur.

Translation work in India could proceed only because the mission succeeded in shipping a press with a printer from London. Unfortunately, the ship

[8] Robert Eric Frykenberg, 'Raja-Guru and Sishiya-Sastriar: Christian Friedrich Schwartz and his Legacy in Tanjavur', in Gross et al. (eds.), *Halle*, vol. III: *The Danish-Halle and the English-Halle Mission*, pp. 471–96 at p. 485.

transporting the press was captured and plundered by a French warship, with the printer dying before he could reach India. But eventually the press arrived and published in several languages. In 1713 a Portuguese catechism was printed in India, the first such work.[9]

Robert Morrison of the London Missionary Society embarked on Bible translation work after he arrived in China in 1807, the first Protestant missionary. He finished a translation of the New Testament in 1813 and of the whole Bible in 1819, which was published only in 1823 in Malacca. From their base in Serampore, Joshua Marshman and Johannes Lassar also worked on a translation of the Bible into Chinese, which was published in 1822. As it turned out, that translation was seldom used.

It was Baron von Canstein, as it happened, who lent his support to the SPCK, the first such Protestant organisation, which was founded in London in 1698. The SPCK had as its stated purpose 'to promote religion and learning in the Plantations abroad and to propagate Christian knowledge at home'. It decided, however, to allow as a spin-off activity the formation of a missionary arm called the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) with the goal of sending out missionaries and maintaining them abroad. A Royal Charter in 1701 established the SPG as a missionary foundation.

In their capacity as Associates of Dr Thomas Bray (1658–1730) many SPG agents were commissioned for missionary service in the American colonies. Bray himself went up to Oxford in 1674 where he was a student at All Souls, graduating in 1678. As a philanthropist he was an ardent promoter of missions, and the founding spirit of the SPCK and the SPG. He wrote what he called his 'General Plan' 'for the Propagation of the true Religion in the Plantations'.

Although appointed in 1695 as a commissary in Maryland by Henry Compton, Bishop of London, Bray did not leave immediately but rather went on to make wide-ranging contacts in the Netherlands among the Huguenot refugees there, spreading his ideas of doing missionary work among New World Africans, both slaves and free. He then set sail for North America, arriving in Maryland in March 1700. He returned to England in May but remained active in directing the work in North America from afar. Eventually Bray's missionary plan was separated from the SPCK and the SPG and reconstituted as the Associates of Dr Bray in 1723. Its goal was to do missionary work among Indians and Africans in North America.[10]

[9] Clement, *Correspondence and Minutes*, p. 205n.

[10] John C. Van Horne (ed.), *Religious Philanthropy and Colonial Slavery: The American Correspondence of the Associates of Dr. Bray, 1717–1777* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), p. 2.

Significantly, these missionary initiatives were in part a response to the presence of Africans in the New World, though the missions were tied to colonial and New World interests. In effect, African Americans loosened missions from their colonial association. Among other Protestants, however, the work remained largely ad hoc and sporadic, and often derivative from the efforts of others. Nevertheless, the SPCK's educational and publishing work had an impact at home and on work others were doing in the mission field. In particular, by 1720 there was an extensive program of Bible translation. The SPCK produced 10,000 Arabic New Testaments, 6,000 Psalters and 5,000 Catechetical Instructions. It was the Oriental scholar Heinrich Rudolf, who came to London as secretary to Prince George of Denmark, who led the Society in its Arabic translation work. The targets were communities in the Ottoman dominions, and in Russia, Persia and India. The SPCK began a mission to the Scilly Isles in 1765 that lasted until 1841.

Indigenising theology

The stimulus of indigenous theology was often a corollary and consequence of the creation of the vernacular Bible, with the work of field inquiry opening the door to indigenous inquiry and reflection. Bible translation evoked and reinforced the religious substratum of traditional society, with biblical stories opening the way for the recovery of local narrative traditions. This indigenous predisposition goes a long way towards explaining why, with relatively little preparation, missions found a ready welcome in traditional societies. By confirming the expectations of converts, Bible translation in the vernacular spurred movement in indigenous ideas and attitudes. The old vocabulary of religious thought and activity, including prayer, invocation, blessing, thanksgiving, healing and prophecy, was given scriptural range and authority for the first time.

The historic shift in the reception of Christianity involved paying close attention to local materials and ideas if mission was to achieve its goal of conversion. In 1737 George Schmidt, a Moravian missionary, arrived among the Khoikhoi tribe of South Africa – eager, he announced, to bring the Saviour to the people who, in his view, lived in darkness. The small matter, however, of his ignorance of their language stood in the way, and to overcome it he needed their expertise and resources. When he told the people why he came among them, a stranger from across the seas, they replied:

> 'That is good, *baas* [master].'
>
> I asked them, Schmidt says, if they knew that there was a great Baas, who had given them their cattle and all they possessed.

'Yes,' replied [the tribesmen].
'What do you call him?'
'We call him Tui-qua,' was the reply.[11]

Schmidt plunged into the world of the Khoikhoi with the newly acquired name of their Supreme Being on his lips, and in the process stumbled on his own cultural limitation. His turning to the people for help and guidance was a de facto forfeiture of the European advantages of mission. Constrained to observe the customs of the people in order to understand what place Tui-qua occupied in their lives, he entered their world unavoidably, if also defensively, attending their ceremonies, one of which he described as follows:

> At the return of the Pleiades these natives celebrate an anniversary; as soon as these stars appear above the eastern horizon mothers will lift their little ones on their arms, and running up to elevated spots, will show them to these friendly stars, and teach them to stretch their little hands towards them. The people of a kraal will assemble to dance and to sing according to the old custom of their ancestors. The chorus always sings: O Tiqua, our Father above our heads, give rain to us, that the fruits (bulbs, etc.), *uientjes*, may ripen, and that we may have plenty of food, send us a good year.[12]

Schmidt's decision to adopt the Khoikhoi/Hottentot word for God facilitated his inquiry into the cultural milieu of the idea of God, an inquiry that drew him closer to the customs and traditions of the people. As a first step, Schmidt inquired from the people what name he should call God, and that irony of having recourse to the people's idiom was not lost on the Africans, for Schmidt stepped back to announce that he came to tell them all about Tui-qua, as if the people had not heard about him. Sometimes this maladroit exercise took a complicated turn when missionaries retreated into their enclaves wishing to avoid contact with local customs. Against the forces of vernacularisation, however, retreat was futile. The missionary study and adoption of non-Western languages invested cultural awakening with its own literacy. Bible translation breached the walls of missionary seclusion: if God could dispense with European languages, converts could dispense with missionary hegemony. Nothing has done more to differentiate Christianity from Western civilisation as a prerequisite of faith than the vernacular Bible translation projects.

The dilemma of the missionary is easy to depict. For all their standard reputation for hospitality and deference, Africans could not avoid taking a

[11] Du Plessis, *A History*, p. 2.
[12] Cited in Edwin Smith, *African Ideas of God* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1950), p. 95.

leading part in the drama of encounter with the West. Some examples now will suggest how Africans became conscious of the advantage of vernacular empowerment vis-à-vis the missionary.

One illustration of the 'stepping-back' posture of missionary work illustrates the issue. When the first missionary, probably Johann Theodore Vanderkemp, arrived among the Xhosa people in 1799, he set about trying to determine how the people thought of and addressed the Supreme Being. In the event, he could not communicate with the people. He returned subsequently with a Dutchman and a Hottentot informant, and they translated for him. The Africans then understood what he had been trying to tell them.

> He made enquiries among us, asking, 'What do you say about the creation of all things?' We replied, 'We call him who made all things uTikxo.' And he inquired, 'Where is he?' We replied, 'Usezulwini; he is in heaven.' [The missionary] said, 'Very well. I bring that very one – i.e., all that relates to or concerns him – to you of this country.'[13]

Having learned from the people the true name for God, the missionary proceeded to announce that he was bringing that God as something new. The truth was quite otherwise. Indeed, Vanderkemp's *vade mecum* was a Hottentot elephant hunter who became his preceptor in his linguistic and religious investigations, a relationship highly significant for the implicit partnership of mission and local agents. At the hands of his informant Vanderkemp was allowed to enter a world virtually unknown to him, and accessible now only on local terms.

Ground rules shaped the assimilation of Christianity, and although missionaries had not intended to occupy a secondary position, their commitment to translation made that inescapable in the long term. The pre-existing vernacular exerted a pre-emptive power over the uncontested authority of mission over the Gospel, and when missionaries assumed that mission must occur by scriptural translation, they privileged the vernacular without intending that to redound on them by downgrading their role as foreign agents. Some of them came upon this discovery in disconcerting fashion.

The example of Theophilus Hahn (1842–1905), the son of the missionary Samuel Hahn, makes this clear. Born at Ebenezer in South Africa, Hahn grew up there and at Bethany in Namaland. He studied in Halle, where he received his doctorate in 1870 with a dissertation on the Nama language. After he returned to South Africa in 1871 he went to Namaland to trade, and to engage

[13] Smith, *African Ideas of God*, p. 101.

in controversial political schemes. He was travelling once by ox-cart through the desert, accompanied by an African guide whom Hahn described as 'a raw heathen'. He began scolding the guide after the travelling party lost its way and was in danger of perishing in the wilds. The guide reassured him:

> 'Tsui//goab will help us,' and insisted when Dr. Hahn expressed disbelief: 'Truly, master, he will help.' They reached water the next day and when they had quenched their thirst and were talking over their troubles, the guide said: 'My dear master, yesterday you could almost have killed me but Tsui//goab refused to allow you to do so, and have you now convinced yourself that the Lord has helped?'[14]

Suitably chastened, Hahn strove to match the faith of his 'raw heathen', whose polite demeanour, however, contrasted rather favourably with his own high-handed conduct. In answering his guide, Hahn conceded that the God who preserved the party from danger was the same who interceded for the guide against his own threats. Outwardly, however, Hahn affected an unrepentant stubbornness. 'We require [Hahn reassures] no further evidence to see what the rawest Namaqua, with all his heathendom, means by Tsui//goab.'[15]

Hahn set out holding the upper hand, yet he now learned something of great religious value as shown by his begrudged admiration for the Nama people.

Ultimately, mother-tongue speakers in their natural habitat possessed the trump card in intercultural exchanges with missionaries, however powerful these missionaries might be. Dr Henry Callaway, a nineteenth-century Anglican medical missionary who became a pioneer of Zulu language and religion, describes a tense situation at a particular point of the translation of the Bible into Zulu when the African members of the translation team held up the translation work because they were not satisfied with the result. It forced Callaway to submit to the vetting of his African colleagues. 'I have a "committee" of native experts sitting on the translation! Each of the three natives has a translation by someone else in his hand, and I read ours, verse by verse.'[16]

The concept of 'God' was a central and indispensable category of Bible translation, and, indeed, of Christianity. The enterprise would be doomed without it. That the concept existed prior to missionary work posed a major

[14] Hahn, *Tsuni-llGoam*. See also Smith, *African Ideas of God*, p. 97.
[15] Smith, *African Ideas of God*, p. 97.
[16] Cited in Clement M. Doke, 'Scripture Translation into Bantu Languages', in Clement M. Doke and D. T. Cole (eds.), *Contributions to the History of Bantu Linguistics* (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand Press, 1961), pp. 108–25 at p. 115.

challenge to claims of Christian originality. In the event, it might happen that both the notion and the name of God were readily accessible, in which case simple adoption could proceed with all due facility. Where that was not the case, however, the translator was in an open quandary because virtually nothing was possible without that step being taken. For the Valiente Indians of Panama the name for God is a great mystery. When the missionary Efrain Alphonse attempted to discover the name, he was taken to see an old medicine woman in the tropical forest of Bocas del Toro. The woman subsequently engaged in a séance, and, in a trancelike state, pronounced the sacred name of God. 'These men', she declared, 'are talking about *Ngobo*, the God of heaven and earth. Listen to them!'[17] Falling from the lips of the old diviner, Ngobo was adopted as the hallowed name of the God of the Christian Scriptures, and a crucial intercultural step was taken to naturalise Christianity in its new environment.

Interest in the subject of God involved Alphonse in a piece of geographical adventure as well as cultural archaeology. The towns and cities failed him in his search for the true name of God, but, with local help, he followed the fading trail into the forest to sit at the feet of a frail diviner who went into a trance to dredge up the name of the great mysterious force of the universe. That name Alphonse reclaimed and displayed in the open as the God of ancient Israel and as the 'God and Father of Jesus'. Consequently, a pivotal indigenous religious concept acquired a new lease of life by way of Christian adoption. Alphonse felt that something of his missionary vocation was at stake in the recovery of the local name for God, his credentials as an outsider notwithstanding. It indicates the counter-message of Bible translation in the sense that in the field what mattered was not the missionary discovery of indigenous culture so much as the indigenous discovery of Christianity. The vernacular Bible gave mission a necessary local orientation.

Indigenous liberation

Missionaries used their linguistic investigations to delve deeper into indigenous styles and forms as a substitute for their European analogues. They set out with Western ideas of Christianity only to hit the roadblock – or, for the discerning, the promise – of the vernacular in unforeseen ways. Bible translation became the catalyst for discussions about the new society it required. The American missionary Thomas Jefferson Bowen, who wrote an impassioned

[17] Nida, *God's Word*, p. 38. See also Nida, *Customs and Cultures*.

defence of mission as 'civilisation', illustrates this. He argued that it was not enough to bring Africans the knowledge of Christ; they must be instructed in the science and arts of modernity. In the process, however, Bowen acquired a high degree of proficiency in Yoruba and wrote admiringly of the beauty and richness of the language. He confessed a deep appreciation for the invocatory prayers of traditional Yoruba worship, including the cult of Ifa, the Yoruba divinatory system. He wrote a *Grammar and Dictionary of the Yoruba Language* which was published, notably, if somewhat inaccessibly, in the *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge* in 1862.

Commenting on the role of missionaries in the scientific development of the Yoruba language, the Nigerian Yoruba historian J. F. A. Ajayi says: 'The orthography of Yoruba is today substantially that laid down by the missionaries. Their rules of grammar have been frequently criticized, but their translations are still recommended as works of high literary value.'[18] So much for Dr Johnson's assertion that writers of dictionaries are those who are 'exposed to censure, without hope of praise'. Bowen's accomplishment must be appreciated for the innovation it was in the generation before anthropology became an academic discipline. In 1884 Edward Tylor (1832–1917) was the first person to be appointed to an academic chair in anthropology at Oxford University, but even then field anthropology remained a missionary preserve, as demonstrated in the work of Robert Henry Codrington (1830–1922), a missionary in Melanesia from 1877 to 1888.

The process of acquiring expertise in the indigenous languages brought missionaries up against religious customs. One representative Christian figure who reflected on this process was Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther (*c.* 1807–91), the foremost African churchman of the nineteenth century. A native of the Yoruba town of Oshogun, Crowther was taken captive at the age of thirteen by Fulani and Oyo Muslim forces and sold as a slave to a Portuguese slave ship in Lagos. He was eventually rescued, in April 1822, by the British Naval Squadron and taken to the West African city of Freetown, Sierra Leone, where he came under missionary instruction. He was ordained in England in 1843 and subsequently consecrated bishop at Canterbury Cathedral in June 1864. He played a formative role in developing the missionary outreach to Nigeria, where he used his considerable linguistic gifts in the cause of Bible translation.

Crowther recognised translation to be more than a mechanical drill because something of the genius of the people was involved in it. With the sound

[18] J. F. A. Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria: 1841–1891: The Making of an Elite* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, repr. of 1965 edn.), p. 128.

instincts of a field ethnographer, he made a point of befriending ordinary people without regard to their religious affiliation, going on to pay close attention to the speech of the elders in order to get behind new inventions of the language and the colloquialisms that break the line of continuity with the original. He followed the ripple effects of the initial missionary contact, finding his way to the core of the vital material, which he reclaimed as a trophy of the collective cultural memory and as the subject of Christian adoption.

> For this reason he befriended pagans and Muslims alike, 'watched the mouth' of the elders and, while discussing theology and other serious matters with them, noted down 'suitable and significant words.' When he tried such words in common speech, he found that, like 'thrown away words,' they sounded stale, but 'to the rising generation, they will sound sweet and agreeable.' He went everywhere with pencil and paper.[19]

Crowther's superb field skills helped to direct his inquiries towards a deeper appreciation of custom and context, tracking incidents of use and practice against the rules and conventions of society. Precisely because Crowther envisaged long-term Christian engagement with these materials, he strove for accuracy, naturalness and dynamism at the same time. Cultural and linguistic facts, he said, must be located in the values and ideals they embody. He wrote in 1844 that his linguistic investigation encouraged him to dig deeper into other aspects of traditional African life, suggesting how the coming of Christianity could be the second wind of threatened cultures. It is an important theme of vernacular Bible translation.

Crowther's infinite patience enhanced his natural flair for languages and for ethnographic inquiry. To study only the elements of language, Crowther knew, would fail to do justice to the treasure trove that language is – a rich and accurate register of human experience, and not just the playground of academics. Accordingly, he became a cultural ambassador, finding the missionary enterprise ideally suited to his gifts and temperament. In that fact we have a clue to the nature of Christian mission – in spite of the irony that Crowther was eventually crushed by the machinery of missionary hegemony. In response to the reverberations of scriptural translation, Crowther explored other aspects of the culture, suggesting that literal translation was woefully inadequate to the challenge at hand. 'In tracing out words and their various uses,' he admits, 'I am now and then led to search at length into some traditions and customs of the Yorubas.'[20] Crowther's systematic inquiry into the

[19] Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria*, p. 128.
[20] Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria*, p. 128n.

Egungun secret society and the cult of Ifa divination, for instance, deepened the connection between spoken language and its written form. Such inquiry contributed in other ways to the strengthening of a sense of Yoruba national identity.

Crowther was eager to allow what Livingstone called 'the eloquence of the native assembly' to guide and shape Christian encounter. The sense of responsibility this created for preserving the authentic forms of indigenous life and custom remains a genuine achievement of mission, while at the same time challenging missionary paternalism with the demand for equality.

In many parts of West Africa local initiative was decisive in promoting Bible translation.[21] In Ghana the local clergyman A. W. Hanson translated Matthew's Gospel into Ga in 1843, and collaborated in the translation of the New Testament and eventually of the complete Bible in 1866. In East Africa modern translators in Ethiopia were able to build on the fifth-century translation of the Bible into Ge'ez. That was how an Amharic translation of the Bible by an elderly Ethiopian monk, Abu Rumi, was published in London in 1840, a demonstration of Ethiopian initiative and leadership.

Encounter and reciprocity

When we consider the wider horizon of scriptural translation, we are challenged to notice something that has easily escaped attention, namely, the peaceful and orderly context in which all this linguistic enterprise took place. This is not to say that there were no wars or strife at the time – for there were – but the inquiry launched to amass information and linguistic material encouraged habits of patience, methodical observation, consistency and critical reflection, all of which surmounted intertribal strife. Neighbouring languages and cultures were exposed to each other in the environment of systematic field investigations outside the pressures of war and inter-ethnic strife. In this atmosphere translators attempted to establish etymologies and the history of developments in the languages and people concerned. Through a staggering wealth of detail, missionary translators and their local counterparts investigated and documented the various aspects of the language in grammars, dictionaries, vocabularies, primers, commentaries, collections of proverbs, idioms, myths and folklore. For the first time there was available

[21] Aloo Osotsi Mojola, 'Bible Translation in Africa', in Noss (ed.), *A History of Bible Translation*, pp. 141–62.

a meticulous inventory of local cultures produced by the most exacting standards of systematic inquiry. In many cases, the results have stood the test of time.

In his critical survey of the history of Zulu literature, Professor C. L. S. Nyembezi of the then University of Natal makes the valid point that a general awakening of the Zulu coincided with a new interest in the Zulu language, and that the great pioneers of Zulu language and literature were missionaries and the Zulu agents they trained. It was not simply that 'missionaries concerned themselves primarily with grammars, dictionaries and the translation of the Scriptures, some of them recorded folk-lore, proverbs and valuable historical material'.[22]

Yet the enterprise was not always prosecuted with detached brilliance and mastery, for there were awful specimens of incompetence, so that innumerable 'howlers', 'widows' and 'orphans' in translation abound. In such cases the effects on the ground were far from salutary, with persisting evidence of confusion, disagreement and partisan haggling. Missionaries were not above fault, one of their most common being to see Bible translation as foolproof guarantee of desired results. In our day, such results include the prevention of HIV/AIDS, the advancement of women, the suppression of superstition, the promotion of Christian unity, support for national integration, respect for international harmony and the dawning of the long-awaited universal reign of peace – as if Bible translation is the missing link of paradise on earth. That the idea of the Bible as a cure-all should persist in our day shows how little understood the nature of Bible translation and its accompanying local orientation remains. The Bible is not the blueprint of Western progress, or the panacea for all ills.

It is important to stress that whatever brilliance there is in Bible translation it is there largely because of missionary agency. Through most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries much of the best work in languages had the fingerprints of mission agents all over it. When the study of languages was subsequently established in universities, however, the new breed of scholars saw figurative patricide as a way to assert their independence and originality – and to dispel their adolescent religious bogeys. The facts, however, seem straightforward enough. The attitude we have learned to deplore in missionaries when they showed a lack of appropriate respect for indigenous customs contrasts in a positive way with their attitude towards local languages:

[22] C. L. S. Nyembezi, *A Review of Zulu Literature* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1961), p. 3.

studying the vernacular and stripping it down to its constituent parts in order to increase appreciation for its integrated vitality. Finally, with a vernacular liturgy, the process was consummated. The religious motive for embarking on translation does not really affect the point at issue, but merely strengthens the case for bringing the best resources of mind and spirit to bear on translation in order to make the result worthy of consecrated vocation. Even conflicting and rival interpretations sparked critical indigenous interest. Local cultures were enhanced in the process.

In tracking down correspondences, similarities, 'false cousins' and other combinations and permutations within languages, missionaries helped to establish important links among members of the wider African language families, and thus contributed to the reducing of ancient antagonisms and suspicions. Admittedly, denominational rivalries did introduce suspicion and misunderstanding in many communities. Yet the deleterious consequences of these rivalries were often more than mitigated by the cumulative impact of the vernacular Scriptures. Undeterred by theological differences, all the major Protestant denominations worked together to pool resources to make the Bible available in authentic inclusive translations. Bible translation in modern mission history was far removed from the religious upheavals of its earlier European counterpart. As Tom Beetham observed, 'The process of translation helped to heal the divisions of the Church. . . . What has brought Protestant missions together more than anything else has been the fellowship in the work of translation of the Bible.'[23] Evidence of this was the increasing cooperation between Catholics and Protestants. 'Protestant versions in a number of languages have been used through the years by Catholic missions.'[24] A new and active sense of ecumenical solidarity grew between Catholics and Protestants in translation projects, with joint work in 170 areas.[25] The Scottish missionary linguist Robert Moffat said he took pains in his widely acclaimed translation of the Bible to avoid 'giving the slightest tinge to any rendering in favour of any creed'.[26] And what helped to overcome denominational resistance also worked to promote mother-tongue advancement. Anyone surveying the scene today will be impressed by the extent of inter-ethnic encounter in church and society alike.

[23] T. A. Beetham, *Christianity and the New Africa* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967), p. 55.
[24] Beetham, *Christianity and the New Africa*, p. 56.
[25] William Richey Hogg, 'God's Mission – our Ministry', *Perkin's Journal* (Summer 1985), pp. 6–19 at p. 13.
[26] Doke, 'Scripture Translation', p. 111.

A few examples must suffice on this point. The spectacular rise and expansion of the Harrist movement illustrates well the cross-ethnic dimensions of Christian renewal in Africa. William Wadé Harris, the founder of the movement, was a charismatic figure active in the Ivory Coast and south-western Ghana between 1913 and 1915. He was born in Liberia. His converts, estimated by some sources at well over 100,000, were spread across the colonial boundaries and included numerous ethnic groups of the area.[27] The Harrist Church has responded to this ethnic diversity by creating 'a comprehensive territorial organization of dioceses and archdioceses with a metropolitan see at Abia-Niambo, complete with cardinals, a sacred college and even a pope'.[28] Predictably, the effort failed, for the ferment of conversion was too unstable to reduce to such a fixed bureaucratic structure. Eventually a more flexible and dynamic leadership style was developed in tune with the ethos of the movement.

On the other side of the continent another example, from Kenya, concerns the Church of Christ in Africa (CCA), founded by a Luo, Matthew Ajuoga. Unlike Harris, Ajuoga traced his call to conflict with the Anglican mission, yet in his case, too, the vernacular and ethnic issue was of considerable importance. In 1953 the Luo Old Testament was published, and Ajuoga was struck by the word the missionaries translated as *hera*, namely, the Greek *Philadelphia* and the English 'love'. He claimed that *hera*, 'brotherly love', was absent in missionary treatment of African converts, and concluded that such treatment represented a scandalous failure of love. After several years of protest and discussion aimed at major reforms in the church, Ajuoga and his followers separated themselves and established the CCA in 1957, which till then had been a purely Luo church.

In time the church's reach extended across ethnic boundaries and appealed to several ethnic groups at once. 'By 1965 the CCA claimed members among fifty-six of the tribes and sub-tribes of Kenya, Uganda and northern Tanzania; by 1967 eight dioceses had been formed in the three nations. Among its seventy clergy then there were two Teita, two Kikuyu, six Luyia (including one archdeacon) and one Gusii – all from Bantu tribes traditionally somewhat hostile to the Luo.'[29] Yet another example, to return to West Africa, is the Church of the Lord (Aladura), founded by Josiah Olunowo Oshitelu of Nigeria. It

[27] Sheila Walker, *The Religious Revolution in the Ivory Coast* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).
[28] Barrett, *Schism and Renewal*, p. 176.
[29] Barrett, *Schism and Renewal*, pp. 260–1.

established branches in different parts of Nigeria, and founded an active missionary movement in Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and further afield.[30]

All this is evidence of a widespread desire in much of black Africa for social harmony and mutual tolerance; that urge burst into the open with these Independent Churches and the entire phenomenon of the charismatic revival, called Aladura in West Africa and Zionism in southern Africa. Many of these new religious movements spread beyond so-called tribal communities and embraced an impressive mosaic of peoples, languages and cultures. The movements took mutual aid and encounter far beyond the confines of formal denominations under the ever-watchful eye of the missionary. And thanks to vernacular literacy, much of the religious heritage of the old Africa was made available in parallel and other translations. These translations were the foundation stones of the worldwide awakening.

We must take note here of the energetic discussion that ensued in missionary and local centres about how and how well the task of translation should be undertaken. Insofar as the target was the recipient local communities, this discussion took place on the ground and at source, not around a missionary table in London, Rome, New York, Paris, Berlin, Stockholm, or Copenhagen. From the point of view of field inquiries, the debates, such as there were, in the metropolitan countries appear abstract and detached. Long before the statistical centre of Christianity's gravity began its southern hemispheric shift, there was this momentous shift of translation – a shift that ran like a deep fault in the hard crust of perceptions of colonial mastery of the subject peoples. Bible translation harnessed the gift of tongues to place societies beyond the West on the forefront of a new Pentecost. It signalled the shift of Europe itself to the margins of the new awakening as the old heartlands were eclipsed by the new resurgence.

Missionary translators groped and stumbled after rules and procedures to guide them in the more deeply shaded layers of meaning of the world's virgin languages. Often they had nothing to go by: no orthography, dictionary or grammar, and no standard field guide. They were entering uncharted territory, with their own limitations and mortality to contend with. Without the advantages of a library and of scholarly resources, they proceeded by trial and error. The more enlightened among them understood that they would have as good as lost their footing if they had to have recourse to Western validation. European languages were little help in the impetuous stream of clicks, tones and sounds of the unknown tongues of unknown peoples. No one

[30] Turner, *History of an African Independent Church*.

had written down these languages before because no one thought they were that worthy of attention. Appropriately, the missionaries who wrote them down were decried for a related reason.

A lively debate ensued in the field, with missionaries calling attention to details of the culture in new and illuminating ways. In significant cases, rivalry among missionaries was about who could produce the most authentic and the most plausible translation at the same time, and not about statistical success or denominational advantage. Competence in the vernacular was the test of missionary credibility, and the measure of durable conversion, as Livingstone testified from his experience.

An important lesson of field practice was that, however reluctantly, missionaries saw that mission was not about sifting the world into an identity of cultural likeness, with difference and diversity pressed into a single mould in pursuit of ecclesiastical hegemony. Obedience to the Gospel was not, as Roland Oliver had argued, commensurate with adherence to a universal cultural paradigm.[31] As carriers of the Gospel non-Western languages could be explained only by their own intrinsic grammar and in their own social environment. Thanks to Bible translation these languages provided irrefutable evidence of God's activity.

That evidence could not be separated from the intrinsic humanity of the people, and it brings up the second lesson, the cultural effects of missionary interest in local languages and cultures. So startling is the idea that critics can see no reason for translation except the motive of domination. It is like saying that trees exist so that a storm may rise and shake them – you start with the storm and produce trees to brew it. In the first ardour of their enthusiasm, Africans rushed to conclusions about the opportunities the new religion gave them. Yet even in that enthusiasm there was recognition of the need to consider seriously what the people learned, and to build on that foundation in critical partnership with missionary agents. Bible translation has not been the storm that toppled sacred trees: it planted its own sacred tree.

Some examples will now illustrate these points. To begin with the last, Xhosa converts used to argue among themselves about the meaning of the indigenous term for God, uTikxo, some saying that uTikxo was above (a *deus absconditus*) and others that uTikxo was below. 'At length [said one of the disputants], the word *uTikxo* was universally accepted on the arrival of the missionaries. For we used to speak of the whole heaven, saying, "*uTikxo*

[31] Roland Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (London: Longmans, Green, 1952), p. 245.

dwells in the whole heaven" but did not clearly understand what we meant.'[32] And then, in a remarkable piece of religious adaptation, Xhosa Christians grafted the new religious material onto the older tradition, claiming both as authentically their own. A pre-Christian hymn speaks of God as the creator of life, of the heavens, of the stars and Pleiades, and also as the Hunter who hunts souls, the Mantle as our protective covering. The hymn is then expanded with a Christian addition that speaks of God as the Hunter who bears wounds in His body for our redemption.[33]

In other respects missionaries were challenged about the direction of their work, and in the initial stages they made ungainly manoeuvres to avoid confronting the issues squarely. In the end all fell into line behind the force of field realities. The Methodists, for example, were unconvinced of the wisdom of embracing the Zulu term for God, uNkulunkulu, fearing that they would be conceding more than was prudent. Accordingly, they coined the unwieldy term uJehova. For his part, the Anglican bishop of Natal in the mid-nineteenth century, Bishop Colenso, tried a more cultured modification of the Latin Deus to uDio. Both experiments were tested in the crucible of field practice.

The verdict was scarcely in doubt. Advancing upon the accumulating field investigation, mother-tongue speakers swept away the studied contrivances and foreign pretences that cut against the grain. The Zulu term for God was adopted with decisive finality. Bishop Colenso produced a Zulu dictionary, which reported on field evidence collected on the subject. The missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission, J. L. Döhne, at first put up dogged resistance with a dictionary he produced in 1857 in which he depreciated the Zulu term for God as only the name of a proto-ancestor of the race. Yet he, too, yielded to field experience and to common sense by adopting the Zulu name for God holus-bolus.

Eventually all the major missions accepted the Zulu word uNkulunkulu for God. Bishop John W. Colenso produced a New Testament translation in 1897 with the standard Zulu term; the first complete Zulu Bible, done in 1883 by the American Board, kept the Xhosa word uTikxo, as did the new edition in 1893. Yet the revised Zulu New Testament of 1917 reverted to uNkulunkulu, as did the revised version of the whole Bible in 1924. In 1922 the Lutherans followed suit, retaining uNkulunkulu for God. One by one the banks of resistance crumbled.

[32] Smith, *African Ideas of God*, pp. 101–2.
[33] Callaway, *Religious System*, pp. 63 ff., 105.

The background to this orchestrated retreat was the detailed linguistic investigations that had become standard in the missionary movement. In 1850 Hans Schreuder published a Zulu grammar, and in 1855 John W. Colenso published another. A further Zulu grammar was published in 1859 by Lewis Grout of the American Board in Natal. Similar attention was devoted to the production of dictionaries. In 1855 Perrin's dictionary of Zulu was published. In 1857 J. L. Döhne published his Zulu dictionary. Bishop Colenso's own *Zulu–English Dictionary* was published in 1861, and in 1880 Charles Roberts produced a similar work.

Parallel with these developments, work was progressing in other linguistic fields. In his groundbreaking study *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, for example, the medical missionary Canon Henry Callaway made meticulous use of Zulu concepts and terminology. In 1859 Bishop Colenso visited the Zulu king, Mpande, and took with him two Zulu schoolboys, Magema and Ndiyane, and a teacher, William. The result was a landmark in the history of Zulu literature, for the party published a book containing accounts in Zulu of the meeting with King Mpande. The three Zulu texts, written by Magema, Ndiyane and William, were the earliest published contributions by Zulus.[34] Magema became a standard-bearer of Zulu literature, calling himself 'a herbalist of language'.

In his linguistic research into kiKongo, the language of the long defunct Kongo Kingdom, Holman Bentley, a Protestant missionary, spoke of 'the richness, flexibility, exactness, subtlety of idea, and nicety of expression of the language'. He said all this knowledge was at the fingertips of the local lad who was his principal helper. Bentley noted that, as he came to appreciate it, kiKongo was so precise and strict that

> the tricks, the double intention, the falsities and illogical perversions which are so freely perpetrated in European languages would not be possible in Kongo argument. Half the quibbles and mountains of reasoning, thrown up upon strained usages of words and indefinite expressions, which have vexed and separated sections of the Christian Church, could trouble no Kongo, with so exact and definite a speech at their command.[35]

Bentley was obviously expressing his relief at having left behind the weary theological strife of Western Christendom.

As can be recognised, the vernacular Scriptures made a dramatic impression on Africans. When a local Christian held a translated Gospel in his hands

[34] Nyembezi, *Zulu Literature*, pp. 3–4.
[35] Bentley, *Dictionary and Grammar*, p. xxiii.

for the first time, he declared: 'Here is a document which proves that we also are human beings – the first and only book in our language.'[36] Equally exultantly, a Christian in Angola celebrated holding the Gospels in his hands for the first time, affirming, 'Now we see that our friends in the foreign country regard us as people worth while.'[37] At an assembly of local Christians when a Wesleyan missionary produced the complete Bible, an elder declared, 'I know that in my body I am a very little man, but to-day as I see the whole Bible in my language I feel as big as a mountain.' Another echoed him: 'I wish that I were as big as an ox, or had the voice of an ox, so that I might shout the great joy which I feel.'[38]

The translation process concentrated attention on the mother tongue, and it led missionaries to a critical comparative perspective on the West while bringing target cultures and languages into the world of literacy and the wider opportunities that represented. Missionaries, for example, dreamed of realising in Africa the perfect replica of the primitive church as the answer, as they saw it, to the declining fortunes of the Western church, while Africans, on the other hand, saw mother-tongue literacy as the door to increased opportunities in society and in the world.

Function of translation

We need to be sensitive in interpreting the cultural changes missionaries demanded of converts. The demands of mission have to be set in the milieu of mother-tongue stimulus: attitudes of missionary superiority persisted, but often only by force of habit. Fluent in the vernacular, converts of the new charismatic movements viewed Westernisation in the church differently. They recited the creeds, for example, but in accents of their own. The polemical tone of the Nicene Creed, with its triumphalist swipe at vanquished heresies, for example, dissolves into chastened prayer of intercession against the powers of the spirit world. The victory of Christ is victory over evil and spiritual powers, and the creed should be testimony of that rather than a wisecrack at religious enemies. The enemy is not someone else's theology: it is the nemesis of one's own spirit world, and is lodged in the many maladies that afflict body and spirit. With the power of Christ the enemy must be driven out and muzzled. That was how a leader of one of the charismatic movements drew

[36] Smith, *The Shrine*, p. 195.
[37] Smith, *The Shrine*, pp. 195–6.
[38] Smith, *The Shrine*, p. 196.

the battle lines of the new spiritual warfare. He argued that, as the active agent, prayer is the 'gunpowder' of the movement; the Holy Spirit, as the terror of the powers of evil, the gun; the Bible in the vernacular is the ramrod. Spiritual warfare requires spiritual weapons, not philosophical propositions. Accordingly, the vernacular Scriptures as written oracle are received and digested for spiritual combat. The splits, splinters and divisions prevalent in the new charismatic and Pentecostal movements are largely shaped by the contest for spiritual mastery over witchcraft, spirit possession, the evil eye, the curse, and dreams and dream interpretation, not as a response to theological disagreements and the accompanying machinery of suppression of heresies. In that spiritual contest the entire charismatic movement in its multifarious expressions is at one. Adopted into the framework of the old divination rituals, the Nicene Creed becomes only a formal precursor to the rules of engagement in this primal reckoning. To say as in the Creed that Christ is 'consubstantial' with the Father is to mask, if only briefly, the much more pertinent invocation of the divine name for health, strength and daily food. The vernacular liturgy made that an easy enough transition. The word for 'substance', say, in Arabic, Yoruba, or Zulu, does not carry the familiar philosophical weight that it does in the European context; accordingly, it gives the compound term 'consubstantial' a much smaller theological weight.

Accordingly, baptism was like being sealed and armed for spiritual warfare, was like acquiring a new suit of armour that allowed you to come into safe contact with the invisible world of spirits. Belief in the supernatural was a prevalent feature of primal societies as it was, indeed, of the worldview of the societies of the Bible, including the Greek. Translation bypassed Europe's Enlightenment checkpoints to connect with the pre-industrial sensibilities of hinterland populations, thereby allowing the Bible to speak authoritatively with an original appeal. There would have to be interpretation and hermeneutics, but that would be a matter of local cultural engagement, not that of the wordplay and mind experiment associated with individual effort. In its own sphere Bible translation opened up different and multiple ways of receiving Scripture and of being religious, including community-based experience.

In general, Protestant missionaries undertook Bible translation without reckoning with the fact that translation would challenge Enlightenment assumptions and motives. The adoption of local languages changed the course of the Christian movement. Resistance to, or encouragement of, translation had a differential result in terms of the marked effects it produced on local views. Encouragement served the goal of authentic discipleship while resistance inhibited local talent, including the talent for religion.

The classical missionary doctrine that commerce, civilisation and Christianity belonged together assumed that cultural diffusion was the appropriate way to establish the church, that converts were primarily cultural adherents, and believers were so only by inference. Certain desirable cultural traits defined a gentleman – and a lady – as much as they did a Christian. Mission could, therefore, impose a cultural template on local populations in the interests of 'normative Christianity' and its highbrow scruples. All that left converts falling well short of the Christian qualification, somewhat in the manner of the God-fearing Gentiles of the Jewish Diaspora. Bible translation struck at that root classical doctrine by adopting the non-Western frame as a necessary and sufficient basis of the transmission of the Gospel. Non-European peoples were thereby given a charter of full membership, a situation reminiscent of its New Testament counterpart. As Peter assured his incredulous and browbeaten Gentile audience: 'Once you were no people but now you are God's people' (1 Peter 2:20). Contrary to custom and to millennia of hallowed tradition, Gentiles, too, Peter challenged, are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, thanks to the God who called them out of darkness into his wonderful light. The fact is that uniformity of belief and culture was not what the Gentile breakthrough was about. Christianity as a dynamic translation movement looked to open frontiers, and this idea received greater recognition in the period covered by this chapter than at any other time in the church's history.

A much respected anthropologist, Monica Wilson, examines translation in Christian mission, but promptly sets it aside to pursue what she herself describes as 'peripheral' matters, which have to do with the imposition of Western culture on Africans. The following passage shows she is grappling with issues central to this chapter but pushed to the periphery here by her failure to adopt a vernacular methodology for mission. The missionaries she is criticising were hostile only to someone else's vernacular, not to their own. To echo Wilson's own words, it need not have been that way.

> Acceptance of Christian teaching implied a radical change in the manner of life of converts; the Christian gospel has been a yeast fermenting change in societies for two thousand years. The writing of the vernacular, the translation of the Bible and teaching converts to read it (which for Protestant missionaries was fundamental to their mission) was in itself revolutionary. Family relationships and the political structure were radically changed by the condemnation of polygyny, and the insistence that death was not caused by witches. It could not have been otherwise. But the missionaries were also mostly from Britain, and they were Victorians imbued with a conviction of the value of their whole manner of life . . . and they pressed all sorts of peripheral changes which later

> generations have questioned. Not only did they preach the Protestant gospel of work, but they expected their converts to wear a Western style of clothing; to build square houses rather than round ones; to settle in a village round the church and school rather than in scattered homesteads; to change the division of labour between men and women, and to abandon ancient festivals, such as the traditional initiation dances, which were judged by whites to be lewd, and became illegal west of the Kei.[39]

In vernacular translation and literacy, however, missionary methods were a great deal more effective, with unintended consequences to match. With the help of vernacular Scriptures, for example, Zulu Christians found sanction for their custom of dressing in skins (Gen. 3:21), and criticised missionaries for not being properly dressed according to the Scriptures. They voiced a similar criticism with respect to church services, with converts insisting that missionary churches were unfaithful to the Scriptures, which call for dancing and music in worship and singing (Judg. 11:35; 1 Sam. 18:6; 2 Sam. 6:14; Ps. 149:3; 1 Chron. 15:16; Luke 7:32, 15:25; Matt. 11:17). As for the custom of singing, converts found in the Scriptures a stream in full spate. In the face of such overwhelming evidence missionary resistance seemed like tinkering with superficial things without affecting the momentum of appropriation and adaptation induced by mother-tongue translation. As Monica Wilson suggests, it is easier to side with Scripture in the mother tongue against missionary requirements, especially when those requirements concern only 'peripheral changes', in Wilson's words.

Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard gave thought to the issue of missionary translation in the modern period, and although he is more straightforward in his account he fails, nevertheless, to press the right conclusions from his own observations. He writes:

> I have read … of the predicament of missionaries to the Eskimos in trying to render into their language the word 'lamb', as in the sentence 'Feed my lambs.' You can, of course, render it by reference to some animal with which Eskimos are acquainted, by saying, for instance, 'Feed my seals,' but clearly if you do so you replace the representation of what a lamb was for a Hebrew shepherd by that of what a seal may be to an Eskimo. … How do you translate into Hottentot 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity …'? In the first place, you have to determine what the

[39] Monica Wilson, 'Co-operation and Conflict: The Eastern Cape Frontier', in Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford History of South Africa*, vol. 1: *South Africa to 1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 233–71 at p. 266.

> passage meant to St. Paul's hearers; and, apart from the 'tongues of men and of angels', what exegetical learning has gone into the elucidation of eros, agape, and caritas! Then you have to find equivalents in Hottentot, and, since there are none, you do the best you can.[40]

As Evans-Pritchard points out, a fundamental difference between lambs and seals in the two respective cultures is that lambs belong to a farming culture whereas seals are part of the Eskimos' hunting way of life. In the words 'you do the best you can', Evans-Pritchard points to the indigenous necessity of translation, with corresponding implications for the value of foreign expertise. In another passage he suggests that profound changes are involved in translation, with the missionary at a disadvantage if he or she worked only with Western notions. In the final analysis the missionary is at the mercy of indigenous presuppositions. Citing a passage from A. M. Hocart, who had Fiji in mind, Evans-Pritchard invites us to reflect as follows:

> When the missionary speaks of God as *ndina*, he means that all other gods are non-existent. The native understands that He is the only effective, reliable god; the others may be effective at times, but are not to be depended upon. This is but one example of how the teacher may mean one thing and his pupil understand another. Generally the two parties continue blissfully ignorant of the misunderstanding. There is no remedy for it, except in the missionary acquiring a thorough knowledge of native customs and beliefs.[41]

The 'thorough knowledge of native customs and beliefs' required for effective communication points to the vernacular projects of mission with its benchmark of 'the eloquence of the native assembly'. In the process of introducing Christianity to societies beyond the West, God as an exclusive, jealous deity made way for local ideas of inclusion in the religious as well as the social spheres. When Ndina or another indigenous equivalent is adopted as the God of Scripture, worship in God's name elicits the full range of religious associations of the indigenous term. When converts prayed to the God of Jesus Christ as Ndina, for example, they created an overlap with older notions and practices.

This does not deny that Christianity brings real change; it is to say that it facilitates change by helping to resolve moral dilemmas and by dealing with inbred fears and anxieties. As E. Bolaji-Idowu, one of Africa's leading theologians, put it, Christianity enlarged the people's vision, freed their minds from

[40] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 13–14.
[41] Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion*, pp. 7–8.

the shackles of superstition and the irrational, and liberated their spirits from besetting fears.[42] Drawing upon the Bible available in the mother tongue, the new Christian leaders set out to banish fear by prescribing scriptural texts as protection. That was how the leader of one of the new churches prescribed Psalm 127 as a sure-fire remedy for the scourge of witchcraft. Scripture provided support for witchcraft to be recognised as a real problem rather than to be dismissed as an illusion. Thus empowered, Africans could make the choice that Christianity demanded. The key remained the vernacular and its cultural magnetic field. Mother-tongue Scripture was the standard-bearer of God's message, and the local believers' trump card against foreign devaluation. It enshrined and sanctioned local understanding in the people's own natural idiom, and often it spawned a people's movement in church and society – choice is empty without change.

When, for example, the conference of Foreign Mission Boards of the United States sent a notice in 1895 to the missionaries working among the Zulu with the request to encourage the idea of a self-supporting church, the notice was disregarded. But when the circular was translated into Zulu, the words for self-support (*ukuzondla*) and self-government (*ukuziphatha*) completely changed the dynamics on the ground. Reading the Zulu circular, the leaders promptly concluded 'that the missionaries were withholding from them the rights of Congregational Churches', that is, the right to choose independent, self-propagating congregations.[43] Such was the potency of translation that the Zulu Congregationalist Church was formed in 1896 as a consequence, and it changed the climate of religious practice.

One contemporary missionary described with self-deprecating grace how he was outperformed by the prophet-leader of a new religious movement who challenged him to preach a sermon in Zulu on the biblical text John 7:37–8. The missionary confessed: 'My little homiletical effort in Zulu was followed by a long exposition by William Chiliza on the same text. He was immediately at home with all these images and what is more, he could bring them to life.'[44]

The logic of mission as translation leading to the establishment of indigenous churches may be reinforced by developments in the intellectual climate of the culture of the missionary. This intellectual climate has to be distinguished from the changes ushered in by vernacular projects of translation.

[42] E. Bolaji-Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longmans, 1962), p. 209.
[43] Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets*, p. 30.
[44] Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets*, p. 91.

The American religious historian William R. Hutchison, for example, has explored this ideological background of Western missions, and even from his own perspective confirms the shift towards the primacy of indigenisation: 'Historicism and cultural relativism about one's religious forms suggested some degree of syncretism in dealing with religious forms evolved by non-Christian peoples; and they further implied a determination that Christian churches, once established abroad, might be left to themselves.'[45] What tended to happen, however, was the renewal of Christianity in the local idiom, with indigenous appropriation overtaking the rules of Western apprenticeship.

Motive and outcome

The religious motive of the missionary vocation often encouraged missionaries to try to produce translations of enduring value. The Reverend J. G. Christaller, a German linguist, served with the Basel Mission in Ghana where he became one of the foremost promoters of Akan language and culture, in particular of the Twi language, doing more than anybody else to establish the study of Akan on secure foundations. Between 1871 and 1881 he was absorbed in mammoth tasks of translation and interpretation, carrying off the entire enterprise with rare distinction. He completed a translation of the Bible in 1871, wrote a widely acclaimed dictionary and grammar of the Twi language in 1875, and crowned it in 1879 with a methodical compilation of 3,600 Twi proverbs and idioms. He developed a deep and abiding love for the Akan. In the preface to his collection of proverbs he wrote:

> May this Collection give a new stimulus to the diligent gathering of folk-lore and to the increasing cultivation of native literature. May those Africans who are enjoying the benefit of a Christian education, make the best of the privilege; but let them not despise the sparks of truth entrusted to and preserved by their own people, and let them not forget that by entering into their way of thinking and by acknowledging what is good and expounding what is wrong they will gain the more access to the hearts and minds of their less favoured countrymen.[46]

Christaller repeats the plea of many missionaries that educated Africans should fit themselves for the special task of indigenisation to which the success of the

[45] William R. Hutchison, 'Modern Missions: The Liberal Search for an Exportable Christianity: 1875–1935', in John K. Fairbank (ed.), *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 110–24 at p. 119.

[46] J. B. Danquah, *The Akan Doctrine of God* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1944), p. 186.

Christian cause was tied. 'A nation's best home is its own language', Christaller observed. 'Every nation has its own gifts and abilities', and no circumstance should justify depriving people of their language and imposing on them a foreign tongue. Rather, no effort should be spared to help people 'develop their vernacular for the reception and expression of higher ideas and conceptions, especially of the Christian truth. . . . Their vernaculars must be cultivated, their ways of thinking must be elevated, their nature must not be destroyed but regenerated and sanctified. Their language as it is must be known in all its richness and must be employed to express every good and wholesome knowledge and truth.'[47] Bible translation primes the vernacular for wider relationships and deeper sympathies. It fits people with new and fresh eyes to see what God would see, and thereby to alter perspective in a radical way. Christaller demonstrated that in his work. His *Twi Dictionary*, published in 1881, has been hailed as an 'Encyclopaedia of Akan Civilization'.[48] Christaller helped found the *Christian Messenger* in Basel in 1883, a paper devoted to the promotion of Akan life and culture. From 1905 to 1917, when it was transferred to Ghana, it published articles in Twi, Ga and English, and covered local events as well as international news such as the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, Halley's Comet in 1910 and the sinking of the *Titanic* in April 1912. The use of the vernacular to report on world news and to instruct its readers in local affairs was a major contribution of the paper, and suggests that its audience could keep abreast of happenings in the wider world without literacy in the European languages. As a piece of indigenous journalism it deserves far more attention than the near-total silence with which it is treated in accounts of African journalism.

Among the greatest tributes to Christaller was that paid by J. B. Danquah, the founding spirit of modern Ghanaian nationalism. Danquah's work was the inspiration that set the stage for Kwame Nkrumah, the founder of modern Ghana. An ethical philosopher, and still enamoured of the idea of the Akan as having originated in the Near East, Danquah wrote *The Akan Doctrine of God*, published in London in 1944. It is a dense, Kantian treatise that attempts to expound the Akan worldview in the schematised terms of social system and religious psychology – a sort of philosophical functionalism. Its very recondite brilliance, however, condemned the book to early obsolescence. A redeeming

[47] Letter from Christaller to Reindorf in Paul Jenkins (ed.), *The Recovery of the West African Past: African Pastors and African History in the Nineteenth Century: C. C. Reindorf and Samuel Johnson* (Basel: Basler AfrikaBibliographien, 2000), p. 99.

[48] Andrew W. Amegatcher, 'Akropong: 150 Years Old', *West Africa* 3593, 14 July 1986, pp. 1471–3.

feature of the work was its appeal to the linguistic achievement of mission. In the book, Danquah acknowledged Christaller as the source and antecedent of his book. He said that Christaller's work was 'the Old Testament', the foundational scripture of the Akan, and that his own attempt was 'the New Testament', which depended on the earlier enterprise. It was high praise indeed, yet richly deserved. Christaller and his local colleagues supplied an interactive cultural map of Akan life and thought, with horizons of new possibilities. It was appropriate that the Ghanaian C. A. Akrofi, called 'an outstanding linguist', should in 1960 produce a new Twi Bible.[49]

Others also paid equally high tribute to Christaller. One was a contemporary, the Reverend David Asante of Akropong. He was trained at Basel from 1857 to 1862, and ordained in 1864. As a protégé of Christaller, Asante acquired the latter's enthusiasm for the vernacular, translating works from German and English into Akan, including John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress.* Asante was clearly a major national figure.

> But such is the preoccupation of Ghanaian biographers with 'merchant princes' and nationalist firebrands that, outside the small circle of the Presbyterian Church and an entry in the *Encyclopaedia Africana*, not much is known of such pioneers as Asante. Yet in the translation of the Bible and in his other books he helped to introduce new concepts, new words and phrases into Ghanaian literature.[50]

As one who should know, Asante wrote to Christaller in 1866 paying his respects to the missionary for his achievement:

> The Psalms are translated perfectly and brilliantly. Nobody can read this translation without deep feelings of awe. They resemble in many ways the songs of mourning (*Kwadwom*) in our Twi language; the Twi people will be glad to read them. May the Lord give His blessing to your labours. I want to congratulate you personally and in the name of Africa. May the Lord give you strength for more such work.[51]

A celebrated architect of language himself, Walt Whitman (1819–92) echoes these primal sentiments when he speaks in his *November Boughs* of the translated Bible as the fuel of the creative life. He affirms:

> I've said nothing yet of the Bible as a poetic entity, and of every portion of it.... How many ages and generations have brooded and wept and agonized

[49] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 719.
[50] Amegatcher, 'Akropong', p. 1472.
[51] Hans W. J. Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), p. 144.

> over this book! … Translated in all languages, how it has united the diverse world! Not only does it bring us what is clasped within its covers. Of its thousands there is not a verse, not a word, but is thick-studded with human emotion.

The special character of the Bible, Whitman pleads, consists in its 'incredible, all-inclusive non-worldliness and dew-scented illiteracy'.[52] In the mother tongue it is the Bible's special power to harmonise the individual and the universal, to blend pithy anecdote and general norm, so that simple parable teems with sublime truth. So much of the Bible is weighed down with tribal matters, so much of it is festooned with the fabric of country speech and with the ripe tones of close-lived experience, that we forget that Scripture was designed for the primal ear and heart.

It is not necessary to rehearse here how Bible translation helped to preserve local names for God, or how the religious and social worlds depended on remembrance of God's name. A provocative question might be, for example, how Christianised Akan appear to have a much better-preserved primal heritage than, say, their Fulani Muslim counterparts in northern Nigeria. The primal religions have survived in much better shape among the Akan than among the Muslim Fulani and Hausa. To all intents and purposes Hausa and Fulani Muslims, for example, have allowed Allāh to displace the god or gods of bygone days, largely because the *takbīr* of the immovable sacred Arabic has cut off all pathways of a viable return to the old metaphysics. Consequently, with little competitive religious advantage, ideas of lordship, mastership and fatherhood were driven into the sphere of household and domestic relations,[53] there to be subjected to the Muslim code under the rubric of *mu'amalāt* (mundane transactions).

Renewal and the cultural impetus

A casual glance at a religious map of Africa suggests that the areas of greatest Christian influence overlap nearly exactly with those of primal religions and cultures. This overlap amounts to more than mere coincidence.

One of the first and most detailed accounts of the connection between African culture and the success of Christian religious activity is the work of John Peel, a British sociologist. In his book *Aladura: A Religious Movement*

[52] Whitman, 'The Bible as Poetry', pp. 1140–2.

[53] For a helpful discussion of translation into Hausa see Barbara M. Cooper, *Evangelical Christians in the Muslim Sahel* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), pp. 115–46.

among the Yoruba, Peel provides an articulate and lucid account of the Yoruba appropriation of Christianity, showing the continuity of indigenous Yoruba themes in the new Christian setting. Peel sets the stage with a description of Yoruba society before going on to consider in detail the rise of African churches and the role of certain religious themes such as prayer and visions, medicine and holiness. He next explores the activities of the new churches and the role of praying bands and other charismatic functions. Against this rich religious background, Peel delves into the sociological origins of the new churches.

From the details Peel supplies on prophet movements, we learn a great deal about the necessary backup of the indigenous culture whose rhythms and values have persisted into the new religion, with a mutual transformation of common elements. Peel is rare among social scientists in conceding the primary importance of indigenous Yoruba religion in the Yoruba social system, and, instead of seeking to emasculate it into a sociological abstraction, he infers from it details of social behaviour and political organisation. As a result he is able to present a coherent account of the interrelationship between the various parts of the Yoruba social and religious world, and thus does not commit what an earlier British anthropologist, R. S. Rattray, called the error of 'construing the customs in terms of our own psychology',[54] or what Evans-Pritchard called the 'If I were a horse fallacy'.[55]

Bible translation experts adopted the name of the Supreme Being of the Yoruba, Olorun or Olodumare, as the *deus revelatus* of the Bible. Yet the entire edifice of Yoruba piety rests not so much on an exclusive preoccupation with Olodumare as in the regular and constant traffic with intermediary powers, called *orisa*s. The cult of Ifa divination is for this reason the most prominent feature of religious practice among the Yoruba: it is related to prayers of many sorts, sacrifice and hierarchical notions of social, political and religious power.[56] Ifa is a technical divinatory art in which the diviner, called the *babalawo* ('master of mysteries'), consults the relevant *orisa*, or intermediary spirit, for the specific needs of the client. The *orisa*s themselves are innumerable (some accounts speak of up to 401), but are ranked in order of importance, thus adding to the systematic complexity of the Yoruba religious world.

In invoking Olorun, Bible translators sounded a bell at the lower reaches of the Yoruba worldview where the *orisa*s as intermediary powers and personal

[54] Rattray, *Religion and Art*, pp. vii f.
[55] Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion*, p. 43.
[56] William R. Bascom, 'The Sanctions of Ifa Divination', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 71 (1941), pp. 43–53.

deities presided. We have early signs of this in much of the historical evidence. When Crowther confronted a *babalawo* then practising in Freetown, the diviner answered his Christian critic with the defence that he could not give up his art, that before giving his medicine to anyone he consulted his *orisa* whether or not he should give it, and that he acted strictly in accordance with the wishes of Ifa.[57] Another Ifa diviner in the same town assured Christians that he had incorporated Jesus Christ into the Ifa system. Before making any sacrifice to the *orisa*, he asked his clients first to call upon the name of Jesus Christ. Both *babalawo*s were convinced that, since the cult of Ifa existed for our good and benefit, to devote attention to the cult was in harmony with the worship of the God of Christianity. This may be one reason why new churches among the Yoruba, initially at least, looked upon Jesus as the supreme *orisa*, the infallible guide and intermediary who guaranteed access to the mind and will of God.[58] Peel correctly notes that 'Christ, having been man as well as God, is much the more appropriate vehicle for prayers, sometimes seen, perhaps, as lower than God the Father, the all-powerful *Oba* ("ruler").'[59] Yoruba religious anticipations of Christianity are so substantial that all that was missing were the institutional organs of Christianity.

In one aspect of the system of Ifa divination, the concordance of a prospective encounter with Christianity is supplied. Bishop James Johnson, Crowther's compatriot and successor in what remained of the Niger Mission, had come into contact with the Ifa divinatory system in Freetown and elsewhere. Like Crowther he was critical of the practice, although in his case too controversy had its many uses. He testified in 1876 that the names of Ifa could justifiably be adopted as attributes of the God of the Bible: 'great, Almighty one', 'the Child of God', the 'One who is mightiest among the gods and prevailed to do on a certain occasion what they could not', and, most remarkably, the 'One who came whom we have put to death with cudgels causelessly'.[60] After hearing the Ifa priest speak in such terms, Johnson felt that the Christian proclamation had no choice but to acknowledge a kindred spirit in such material.

When missionaries preached to Yoruba populations in Yoruba, the overlap, if it was not made by missionaries, would be made by ordinary people as a matter of course. Where Christian preaching was successful it evoked a primal affinity with local materials. We have evidence that even when a local

[57] Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity* (London: Christopher Hurst, 1983), p. 84.
[58] Peel, *Aladura*, pp. 135, 141, 147.
[59] Peel, *Aladura*, p. 147.
[60] Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria*, p. 235n.

cult is in decline for internal reasons, the Christian attention can be a second wind.[61]

It is no mere accident that at the root of prophet movements in African Christianity there is an explicit appeal to indigenous categories of the religious life. An early convert of the British missionary at Ibadan, Nigeria, the Reverend David Hinderer, was Shadrach Mogun. At the turn of the twentieth century Mogun was reported to be living in self-imposed seclusion in the Yoruba village of Emure-Ekiti. One account describes how 'he lives alone with Jesus Christ – to use his own expression. . . . He preaches to the farmers, and now and again visits the town to preach. He looks like an old prophet, and is a veritable John the Baptist preparing the way for Christ's second advent.'[62] As a symbol of the old dispensation Shadrach Mogun was suited to being the carrier of Christianity.

The vernacular impact sent sound waves reverberating throughout the land, and there were numerous communities of people for whom the message of the new prophets came as stirring confirmation of old sacred oracles. For the people conversion meant sharing in the redeemed fellowship of God's people, something for which the sense of kinship implied in the phrase *omo oduduwa*, 'children of the ancestor/ancestress', had prepared them. The difference now was that *oduduwa* was itself kin to the cosmic Christ. Conversion did not mean a psychological 'migration' out of the African world, since it was the outcome of encountering the Gospel in the vernacular. In the colourful tones of the Yoruba tongue, the Aladura revival enunciated the message of the Bible for African ears. A new level of religious understanding was initiated as people experienced forgiveness and a sense of personal acceptance in the fellowship of believers, a fellowship often inadequately grasping after 'the mind of Christ', but still identified with Christ's name.

It must be stressed that for most converts the Bible that they knew was the vernacular Scripture, so that in the new vessel of a written sacred text converts heard God addressing them in the old, familiar idiom. The missionaries provided written, critical authority for the oral culture. One modern missionary statesman commented on this phenomenon, affirming:

> The urge to translate the Bible into every language may have helped to prolong the life of a dialect where reason suggested it ought to lose itself in a regional *lingua franca*. . . . What is important [in this regard] is that men and women, not least women, without any schooling on the Western pattern,

[61] Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, p. 237.
[62] Cited in Peel, *Aladura*, p. 58.

> learned to read in their own language because the Bible was there. In the days before special adult literacy programmes inspired by Dr. Laubach's methods, an old grandmother would come to Sunday School week after week painfully learning the alphabet, then short words, then sentences. Then came the day when, with a friend finding the place for her in the Bible bought at the market that week with her saved-up shillings, her face shone with the joy of recognising, as she read, treasured words learned by heart long ago – a sentence from the 14th chapter of John's Gospel or the story of the woman sweeping her room for a lost coin [Luke 15:8].
>
> The Bible strengthened the Church among the people. It was a family business, the reading of the Word, as anyone knows who has been privileged to come out of the guestroom into the hall of a compound house as the sounds of dawn strengthen and the light of an oil lamp share [*sic*] in the Bible-reading and the family prayer.[63]

The overlap between the Christian revival and the revitalisation of indigenous culture remains one of the most undervalued themes in the study of the history of Christianity, although in many societies beyond the West it stares us in the face at almost every turn. As early as 1954 Absalom Vilakazi, himself a Zulu, wrote an MA thesis at the Hartford Seminary Foundation, entitled 'The Church of the Nazarites'. In it Vilakazi propounded the view that the charismatic revival was the agent for 'the regeneration of Zulu society'. He proved this by calling attention to certain Zulu notions of illness, medicine and healing, suggesting in addition how the idea of 'covenant' became the inspiration for the creation of new forms of community among the Nazarites.

In this analysis, Vilakazi suggests that we stand the established theological and historical methodology on its head by viewing new forms of Christian religious life as some of the best examples of older, authentic forms of local custom. Typically we assume that Christian contact is tantamount to a taint, an assumption that has hardened with colonial domination. Perhaps Vilakazi's point needs more general recognition. If his tacit contention is correct, our defence of 'ethnographic purity' would require us to repair to the new churches as prototypes of village life. The new churches should be viewed as repositories of traditional beliefs and customs. Indeed, not to put too fine a point on it, it may be that these new churches provide us with a unique opportunity to observe how Africans, facing new challenges, work

[63] Beetham, *Christianity and the New Africa*, p. 55.

out a resolution in time-tested channels, a process of change and assimilation that sheds new light on the question of origins in history, society and ideas.

In his seminal work on Christian renewal in Africa, David Barrett identifies this vernacular factor with great consistency. He writes:

> Vernacular scriptures have far greater power to communicate and create religious dynamic than versions in *linguae francae* such as Swahili, Hausa, Arabic, French or English, which have been in circulation in many areas long before the onset of independency without fomenting disaffection. The vernacular translation enables the ethnic group concerned to grasp the inner meanings of … profound and intricate biblical doctrines.… Further, it is clear that these vernacular translations – with all the attendant expenditure of effort on orthography, grammars, dictionaries, and studies of tribal cultures – have contributed markedly to the recovery by Africans of the cultural identity of their tribe, later expressed in such bodies as tribal political parties, welfare societies, and particularly in tribal independent churches.[64]

The irruption of Christianity in contemporary Africa is without parallel in the history of the church. A few examples make this clear. In late 1893 there began in Buganda country (now part of Uganda) a mass movement in Christianity, 'one of the most remarkable and spontaneous movements for literacy and new knowledge which the world has ever seen'.[65] This followed the efforts of Scripture translation led by the lay missionary George Pilkington. Then African evangelists, both men and women, came forward to carry the vernacular Scriptures into the chief districts of the country.

In 1896 there were 200 of these evangelists in regular employment, with 500 others in auxiliary positions. In 1902 the numbers increased to 2,000 men and 400 women, operating as far as the periphery of the forests of the Congo. Pilkington's translated Bible sold 1,100 copies in the year of publication, with an additional 4,000 New Testaments, 13,500 single Gospels and 40,000 Bible-story readers. After visiting Uganda in 1910, Theodore Roosevelt witnessed for himself the staggering results of this work, which he characterised as nothing short of 'astounding'.[66] Similarly, the Roman Catholic missionaries, inclined to scepticism, admitted that 'in truth a violent wind of Pentecost has stirred over these people'.[67] When a census was taken in 1911, of 660,000 Bagandans,

[64] Barrett, *Schism and Renewal*, p. 133.
[65] Oliver, *The Missionary Factor*, p. 184.
[66] North, *Book of a Thousand Tongues*, p. 14.
[67] 'En verité le vent violent de la Pentecôte a soufflé sur ce peuple': Oliver, *The Missionary Factor*, p. 187.

282,000 claimed to be Christian, the figure being nearly evenly divided between 155,000 Catholics and 127,000 Anglicans.[68]

As Beetham observed, in spite of conventional wisdom, Roman Catholic missions were active in the translation enterprise. In North Africa, for example, nearly fifty dictionaries and grammars of mother tongues were printed between 1892 and 1914 on the basis of work carried out by the White Fathers. In 1906 Bishop Bazin's dictionary of the Bambara ('Bamana') language of Mali was published in Paris by the French government. In Uganda the Runyoro prayer book was printed in 1907 at the printing press set up by Julien Gorju (d. 1942), the 'Vicar Apostolic of Urundi'. It was impossible to control the plain import of such vernacular linguistic activity and to restrict it to the confines of the mission station. The effects were irrepressible. As William Sharp (under the pseudonym of Fiona Macleod) noted with respect to the old Gaelic race, the last tragedy for broken nations was not the loss of power and distinction, or even of country. 'The last tragedy, and the saddest, is when the treasured language dies slowly out, when winter falls upon the legendary remembrance of a people.'[69] Bible translation intervened to prevent indigenous cultural collapse, and thus averted 'the last and saddest tragedy' of defeat and loss.[70]

Translation did not always avoid cross-cultural pitfalls, with subtle consequences that escape missionary translators. In one case unsuspecting missionaries tumbled to the realisation that medicine played a complex role in African societies. In the Luganda version of the Bible, for example, the word 'charmer' or 'wizard' was rendered as *basawo*, as in Deuteronomy 18:10–11: 'There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.' When later medical missionaries arrived in Uganda, they were also called *basawo*. With the Bible in their hand, the local people claimed that Scripture prohibited the practice of medicine. Thanks to this confusion in translation, a movement was launched to shun doctors as

[68] Oliver, *The Missionary Factor*, pp. 193–4.

[69] Fiona Macleod [William Sharp], *Winged Dynasty: Studies in the Spiritual History of the Gael* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1904), p. 223.

[70] A theological review in 1978 seemed still tone deaf to the significance of translation in Christianity, for it stated that while French is suitable for Cartesian analysis, and English for pragmatic thought, 'Arabic can strike the heart and mind by its affirmative and incantatory power. Participants in dialogue would do well to remember that not all languages have the same kerygmatic force, nor the same inclination to serenity' (*Pro Mundi Vita Bulletin* 74 (Sept.–Oct. 1978), p. 45).

enchanters,[71] suggesting that the roots of healing bristled with sharp social sensitivity.

Assessment

Let us now consider this African theme within the broader picture of vernacular Bible translation. In the early church the work of Bible translation proceeded in spurts. Yet by the beginning of the eighteenth century, and rising to a vigorous stream by the twentieth, we had a cascade of translations as demonstrated in a report of December 1984 which said that translations of the Scriptures were available in 1,808 of the world's 2,800 languages, with Africa alone claiming nearly one-third of these, with 522 vernacular translations.[72] In the updated figures for 2006, modified in March/April, 2007, the world population is put at 6.5 billion and more than 6,900 spoken languages. Of these languages about 2,426 have some or all of the Bible translated into them, while 1,144 have the New Testament. Wycliffe personnel are reported to be working in 1,379 languages spread over 97 countries, which is 71 per cent of all translation projects worldwide. In the more than seventy years of its history Wycliffe translators have been involved in the combined translation of 710 New Testaments and complete Bibles representing over 78 million people. The *World Christian Encyclopedia* (2001) estimates the annual output of books on Christianity at 340,000 in 164 languages, and that 58 billion copies of the Bible have been produced in 367 languages. These figures show the accelerated pace of change within the last generation. At one stage in the 1980s, for example, continuing efforts were being made to provide translations into an additional 238 African languages, so great was the demand.[73]

This pattern of the correlation between indigenous cultural revitalisation and Christian mission is a consistent one in new Christian communities, with evocative traces in the Gentile revolution in the primitive church. As they pored over the vernacular Bible, Africans saw something of the cultural potential of their own history and experience. The message of the Bible in the vernacular ended the isolation of tribe and language, reversed or slowed the

[71] Smith, *The Shrine*, p. 193.
[72] *Scriptures of the World*, p. 7.
[73] See the *Christian Science Monitor*, 3 September 1985. For an up-to-date linguistic account of the African continent see Dalby, *Language Map*.

process of neglect and indifference, and allowed translators to pull in remote and obscure languages in order to produce a simple and documented system of communication. Just as the English of King Alfred was more complicated than modern English, so were vernacular languages before Bible translation. And the simplicity of translation triggered intellectual currents that inspired comparative inquiry.

In a critical study of the life of Robert Moffat, the outstanding missionary linguist of southern Africa, the observation was made that the vernacular Bible bridged the old and the new. It was a living book in the sense of its resonant testimony coming to life in home-bred tones and accents. It was impossible to ignore. Lifting a vernacular New Testament in his hand, an African convert testified that he and his people had once imagined the Bible to be a charm of the white people designed to keep off sickness and to be a trap to catch the people. He knew differently now. 'We have never heard of such a thing . . . but now we not only hear with our ears, we see with our eyes, we read it, our children read it. . . . We thought it was a thing to be spoken to, but now we know it has a tongue. It speaks and will speak to the whole world.'[74] Moffat himself testified that Setswana, the language he was working with, 'possesses an ample source of suitable words to convey with wonderful clearness, the language and meaning of the Scriptures'.[75] When faced with the translated Bible as the work of his hand, he parried the compliments by observing deferentially, 'I felt it to be an awful thing to translate the Book of God.'[76]

In the period covered by this volume Bible translation has revealed in dramatic fashion linguistic difference and diversity as hallmarks of the Christian movement. By playing a necessary and indispensable role as carriers of the Christian Scriptures non-Western languages became vehicles of change and renewal of their societies. For new converts these languages provided the indispensable channel – and evidence – of God's salvific activity, as well as being vehicles of cultural advancement. God *communicated* with the peoples of the world, and translation channels the divine discourse and the response it elicits.

The rapid, unprecedented expansion of Christianity from the second half of the twentieth century has thrown into high relief the impact of Bible

[74] Smith, *The Shrine*, p. 190.
[75] Cited in Doke, 'Scripture Translation', p. 111.
[76] Doke, 'Scripture Translation', p. 111.

translation on societies beyond the West. The suddenness and scope of the expansion, however, have probably concealed an important theological lesson. Standard theological models of Christianity have presented it as a closed-circuit phenomenon whose main pathways of communication have been laid in the trusted channels of the Western canon.

Criticism of Bible translations includes the view that it spawns syncretism, sects, heresy and apostasy, which are to Christianity what aberration, mutation, infection and suicide are to an immutable organism. Yet the pace and scale of Bible translation in Christianity's post-Western phase are witness to a far different reality. Translation is evidence that Christianity's neurological centre is in flux, that its vocabulary is growing and changing, that historical experience has perspective-altering power, that foreign idioms have lodged in the system like oxygen in the bloodstream, and that Christianity's 'localisationism' in the frontal lobe of heartland Christianity has shifted to the central cortex of frontier Christianity where new, expanded tasks have stimulated tolerance and diversity in the religion. Translation has shifted the 'genetic determinism' of the Western canon by encrypting the religion with the most diverse cultural chromosomes of societies that were until recently on the margins of the religion's heartlands.

The translated Scripture as the birthmark of Christianity has persisted with growing appeal into the vernacular phase of the missionary movement, and in the process has become the benchmark of awakening and renewal. In a speech on the occasion of the bicentenary of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 2004 Archbishop Rowan Williams summed up the implications of Bible translation for the church. 'If scripture can be "re-created" in different languages, the humanity of the Saviour who speaks in scripture must be an extraordinary humanity, a unique humanity. . . . Every language and culture [have in them] a sort of "homing instinct" for God – deeply buried by the sin and corruption that affects all cultures, yet still there, a sleeping beauty [waiting] to be revived by the word of Christ' in the relevant vernacular idiom.[77]

[77] Archbishop Rowan Williams, sermon at the service to celebrate the bicentenary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, St Paul's Cathedral, London, 8 March 2004, pp. 1–2.

Appendix: statistical summary

A summary, by geographical area and type of publication, of the number of different languages and dialects in which publication of at least one book of the Bible had been registered as of 31 December 2001:[78]

Continent or Region	Portions	Testaments	Bibles	Bibles, DC[79]	Total
Africa	213	279	149	(25)	641
Asia	223	228	119	(25)	570
Australia/New Zealand/ Pacific Islands	168	204	33	(5)	405
Europe	110	31	62	(46)	203
North America	40	26	7	(0)	73
Caribbean Islands/ Central America/ Mexico/South America	127	244	21	(8)	392
Constructed languages	2	0	1	(0)	3
Total	883	1,012	392	(109)	2,287

[78] This 2001 *Scripture Language Report* (London and New York: UBS, 2001) provides a statistical summary of Scripture publication in languages of the world as of 31 December 2001. It includes all items registered for the first time by the United Bible Societies during 2001. Languages are registered when copies of printed Scriptures consisting of at least one complete book of the Bible are received in the library of either the American Bible Society or the British and Foreign Bible Society. A few corrections were made to the language databases and are reflected in this statistical summary.

[79] This column is a subsection of the Bibles column – for example, there is a translation of the Deuterocanon for forty-six of the sixty-two languages of Europe in which the Bible has been translated.

PART II

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NEW MODES OF STUDY OF THE BIBLE

4

The History of Religions School

WAYNE A. MEEKS

The History of Religions School (*religionsgeschichtliche Schule*) is the name adopted by a small group of friends who were students, then untenured instructors in the theological faculty of the University of Göttingen beginning around 1890. They insisted that in order to understand the Bible aright one must try to describe the *religion* rather than the theology of ancient Israel and of early Christianity, and that an accurate description required a comparative and strictly historical method. Their proposals aroused controversy and sharp opposition. Most members of the group had difficulty in obtaining stable academic positions, and several of them died relatively young – yet their scholarly publications and their indefatigable lecturing and popular writing effected a revolution in biblical studies. Their method came to dominate the academic study of Old and New Testaments in the succeeding generations not only in Germany but, with local variations, throughout Europe and North America. Their proposals, together with the work of several parallel movements elsewhere in historical, comparative and theoretical descriptions of religions, led also to changes in popular understanding of both Christianity and other religions, still evident today in non-specialist publications and even in popular fiction.

Although historians of the movement speak of its 'founders', and of successive generations of its members, these lists are largely artificial. As one of the acknowledged founders said, it was 'a strange "school" ... without teachers and, at first, also without pupils! ... It was a close-knit circle of young scholars, bound together by mutual friendship.'[1] The circle included Hermann Gunkel, who changed his field to Old Testament in 1889 after publishing a groundbreaking study of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament; the close friends Wilhelm Bousset and Ernst Troeltsch, who had left Erlangen together for the more exciting theological study at Göttingen; William Wrede; Wilhelm

[1] Gunkel, *Bousset*.

Heitmüller; Paul Wernle; and Johannes Weiss. There were several others active in the group's early days but now largely forgotten, notably Albert Eichhorn, a central figure of the circle whose later career was curtailed by chronic illness. Moreover, there were scholars outside the theological faculty who were also caught up in the excitement of exploring the religious antecedents and context of early Christianity, such as the classical philologists Richard Reitzenstein and Albrecht Dieterich.

The school was marked from the beginning by a passionate ambivalence towards theology. All its members were theologians, and much of their writing and lecturing aimed at reform of the religious life of their churches and nation. Yet not only did they share a reaction against the dominant theological currents of their time, they insisted that the aims of the historian must be carefully distinguished from those of the theologian. The eighteenth-century pioneer of historical criticism Johannes Philipp Gabler had already made the distinction between religion, which could be construed as the proper content of the Bible, and theology, which was a secondary construct. Gabler further distinguished *biblical* theology from *dogmatic* theology, and that distinction was widely accepted a century later, but both were still conceived in idealist terms. The young historians of religion came to believe that the biblical theology they were taught 'was not concerned to present the living religion but rather the doctrines [*Lehrsätze*] of the biblical authors'.[2] It was William Wrede who most memorably declared the independence of the historian from that doctrinal description of the object of study; the historian's task was solely the rediscovery and redescription of that 'living religion'.[3]

Living religion, the Göttingen group believed, was the religion of the masses of ordinary people, while theology was the reflective activity of the intellectual elite. This sharp division reflected in part the sense of wide and growing separation between the 'educated' (*gebildete*) and the working classes in modern Germany, but it was also related to the nascent disciplines of ethnography, anthropology and sociology, which were exploring forms of religious life among peoples thought by the Europeans to be less 'advanced'. The way towards understanding religion in its primary manifestation lay in the description of its ritual practices, its *cultus*. Another early monument of the movement exemplified that focus: Wilhelm Bousset's monograph *Kyrios Christos*, which attempted nothing less than a 'history of the Christ-faith from the beginnings of Christianity until Irenaeus'. Bousset undertook to illuminate

[2] Gunkel, *Bousset*, p. 5.
[3] Wrede, *Aufgabe und Methode.*

'the Christ-cult', focusing specifically on the cultic worship of Christ under the title 'Lord', by setting that worship in its historical context, disregarding the customary academic and theological boundary between the New Testament and patristics.

The school's preoccupation with theology and their rejection of the way theology was done around them had a quite particular focus. They had come to Göttingen to study with Albrecht Ritschl, the doyen of liberal theology. Throughout their careers they continued to revere him for 'systematic thought, rigor of the influence of his character, and love for the source documents of the Reformation',[4] and he stood by them when their revisionist thinking aroused sharp opposition from other members of the senior faculty. Yet they came to see that Ritschl's construal of the Bible was fundamentally at odds with a history of biblical religion as they were coming to understand it.

None of them experienced this conflict more personally or expressed it more directly than Johannes Weiss, who married Ritschl's daughter. At the heart of Ritschl's theology was the concept 'the kingdom of God', which he took to be the centre of Jesus' own message. As Ritschl understood it, the kingdom of God was that ideal social order in which human flourishing could reach the potential intended by the Creator and which would be progressively realised as faith responded to God's grace in daily, loving action. Johannes Weiss was deeply moved by the power of this concept to transform the religious life of his contemporaries. Orthodox Lutheran preaching, with its near-exclusive emphasis on the doctrine of justification, left the majority of their contemporaries cold. Grace was identified in the popular mind with a punctiliar act, with no corresponding experience in the lives of those brought up in the church. As a result, education was neglected, and the whole doctrine of grace seemed either a matter of indifference or the cause of 'pietistic self-torment'. In contrast, Ritschl's interpretation of the kingdom of God seemed the best possible way 'to awaken and to cultivate a sound and sturdy religious life'.[5]

No wonder, then, that the young Weiss's first major scholarly investigation (after his *Habilitationsschrift* on the Epistle of Barnabas) focused on the concept 'kingdom of God', seeking to understand how the phrase would have been heard by Jesus' contemporaries. Weiss's findings plunged him into 'a distressing personal conflict', for he discovered 'that Ritschl's concept of the kingdom of God and the like-named idea in Jesus' proclamation were

[4] Troeltsch, '"Kleine Göttinger Fakultät"', col. 282.
[5] Weiss, *Predigt Jesu*, pp. 5–6.

two different things'.[6] Far from being a call to progressive personal and social morality, Jesus' announcement of God's kingly reign pointed to a miraculous invasion of the human sphere by God's transcendent power. It was an *eschatological* image, and Weiss's book placed Jesus' proclamation – and, indeed, Jesus' entire mission – within the context of Jewish eschatological expectations and, more specifically, within the special eschatological scenarios that had developed within the *apocalyptic* movement.

However distressing Weiss's own personal conflict, it was nothing compared to the shock waves that his book's publication would send through the theological world. Years later Rudolf Bultmann recalled one of his own teachers saying, 'If the kingdom of God is an eschatological entity, then it is a concept unusable for dogmatic theology.'[7] In the event, Weiss's viewpoint, taken up with enthusiasm by his colleagues in the History of Religions School and by their students and successors – Bultmann not the least among them – transformed theology in the twentieth century. Albert Schweitzer has described his relief upon reading Weiss, like a hiker finding firm ground after wandering in a swamp.[8] Schweitzer became the leading populariser of Weiss's central construction: Jesus as apocalyptic prophet.[9]

The historians' focus on ritual or *cultus* as the central phenomenon of religion created problems for them and their readers as acute as those posed by Weiss's rediscovery of eschatology. Bousset's history of the Christ-cult revolutionised the history of ancient Christianity. Similarly Gunkel's search for ritual settings of the Old Testament traditions, including the Psalms and the creation stories, carried further by his Norwegian student Sigmund Mowinckel, transformed ways of studying the religion of ancient Israel. Yet the Göttingen group, like most liberal Protestants of their time, had very negative attitudes towards ritual and sacraments in the life of contemporary churches. Following Schleiermacher in this respect, they identified the inner reality of religion with personal experience. While they saw that the *cultus* might be a means of transmitting the experience, it remained for them one of the externals of religion. Ritual, they thought, encouraged the 'material-magical piety' characteristic of earlier stages of religious evolution, no longer respectable to children of the Enlightenment – and, for Protestants, a defining feature of the Roman Catholicism they feared and despised. The contradiction was felt most acutely by the two close friends Bousset and Troeltsch, who debated the question

[6] Weiss, *Predigt Jesu*, p. xi (from his foreword to the 2nd edition of 1900).
[7] Introduction to the 1964 reprint of *Predigt Jesu*, 2nd edn., p. v.
[8] Schweitzer, *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 198.
[9] See esp. Schweitzer, *Mystery of the Kingdom of God*.

with some fervour. In the end, Bousset allied himself with a thoroughgoing rationalism, insisting on a purely spiritual religion for mature people, without the props of ritual. Troeltsch, on the other hand, took much more seriously what he regarded as the 'social-psychological laws' of communal life. In a lecture he gave in 1911 to a conference of Swiss Christian students, Troeltsch warned of a 'religious chaos' threatening European society at the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century. Among the educated classes only an intellectual, 'spiritual' kind of religion – of the sort that he and Bousset espoused – seemed possible, but ascendancy of such a religious temperament would lead to disintegration of community, to an individualism that might cling to ephemeral fads or aesthetic notions of religiosity, but would have no power to move people. The working classes, on the other hand, were either altogether estranged from the church and religion or had succumbed to traditionalist, authoritarian, ritualistic survivals. Liberalism in the form of the ethical individualism prevalent at his time must fail, because it did not comprehend the importance of *cultus* and thus failed to form community. In its place, Troeltsch urged that a new *cultus* must take shape, centring on the historical personality (*Persönlichkeit*) of Jesus:

> Whatever may happen, a certainty and power of the saving knowledge of God is unthinkable without community and cult. Consequently a cultus illuminated by the Christian idea will have to have as its center the gathering of the community around its Head, the nourishment and empowerment of the community through its absorption into the revelation of God contained in the Christ image, propagated not through dogmas, doctrines, and philosophies, but by handing on and keeping alive the Christ image, the worship of God in Christ.[10]

Just what kind of cult that would be remained vague, as did Troeltsch's understanding of the exact role of scientific history in the preservation and correction of this *Christusbild*. 'It is not a matter of details, but of the factuality of the whole manifestation of Jesus and of the fundamental principles of his preaching and his religious personality. It must be possible with historical-critical tools to determine these as historical reality.'[11]

Troeltsch was perhaps more conscious than most of his fellow historians of religion of the tensions implicit in their practice of historiography. His close association with Max Weber made him acutely aware of the kinds of questions that were being asked in the emergent field of sociology. The ritual

[10] Troeltsch, *Geschichtlichkeit Jesu*, p. 29.
[11] Troeltsch, *Geschichtlichkeit Jesu*, p. 33.

studies of Gunkel, Mowinckel, Bousset and others underscored one side of that social face of religion, and the work of Troeltsch that remains the most widely known is his *Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*.[12] Yet, as the quotation above illustrates, the romantic notion of the heroic, individual 'personality' stands at the centre of his conception of Christian religion. Carlyle's evocation of the hero[13] had had a powerful resonance among German intellectuals; Bousset wrote a popular article called 'Thomas Carlyle: A Prophet of the Nineteenth Century'.[14]

The tension between history of communities and history of idealised personalities, between external practice and subjective experience, remained unresolved; indeed, it continued to produce sharp divisions and tortured arguments in the successors of the History of Religions School into the late twentieth century. The dialectical theology of Karl Barth rejected the bourgeois image of personality at the heart of what he called 'culture Protestantism', preferring to discover in both Scripture and the history of dogma a vast, complex master narrative of the divine and human story – an approach implicitly more congenial to the institutional and social history of the church, but deliberately looking away from that immanent history to a newly re-narrated history of salvation. On the other hand, the 'demythologisation' of the New Testament by Rudolf Bultmann and his disciples responded directly to the issues posed by the history of religions but undertook to redeem the subjective individualism of their approach by translating the mythic pictures offered by the sources into 'the right philosophy', the existentialism principally represented by his Marburg colleague Martin Heidegger, as opposed to the idealism of his predecessors. Neither Barth nor Bultmann had any use for the sociological interests of a Troeltsch.

Troeltsch's confidence in the power of scientific history to solve fundamental problems in describing religious life, despite his perception of its unresolved tensions, illustrates a central assumption that he shared with the other members of the History of Religions School: 'It must be possible with historical-critical tools to determine' the truth about religion. The new historians of religion were beginning to add to those historical-critical tools a far greater range than what had been customary in their student days. Historical criticism had been concerned mainly with the history of the biblical text, including the delineation of putative sources older than the extant books. The work of Julius

[12] Troeltsch, *Social Teaching.*
[13] Carlyle, *On Heroes.*
[14] Bousset, 'Thomas Carlyle'; see Lehmkühler, *Kultus und Theologie*, pp. 56 f., 152–7.

Wellhausen, who had studied at Göttingen and taught there from 1870 to 1872, was especially influential. He had extended older theories of the prehistory of the Pentateuch (in his version, the Hexateuch, including the book of Joshua) by reconstructing several documents of quite different provenance and date that, he argued, had been woven together by late, anonymous editors. For the New Testament, reconstruction of sources had long been the most widely accepted way to explain the similarities and differences among the Synoptic Gospels, and analogous techniques were being employed to solve perceived problems in the Fourth Gospel, the Acts, Paul's letters and the Apocalypse. The Göttingen group took all these efforts for granted, but they were pursuing larger game: not merely the history of the text, but the history of the religion. What tools could produce that kind of history, the story of 'the living religion' of ordinary people? In what dimensions of that story could the truth about that religion be found?

The new historians of religion found themselves at the intersection of two different conceptions of history's aims that, though not clearly delineated, contended for dominance in European biblical scholarship of the late nineteenth century. The simpler and most direct notion looked for truth at the beginning. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had brought a new preoccupation with *das Urchristentum*, usually translated 'primitive Christianity'. This focus coincided with an emphasis on origins in many areas of inquiry; a German lexicon of 1746–7 has only twenty-three words with *Ur-* as prefix; that of the brothers Grimm (begun in 1854) more than 800.[15] The notion had both ancient and recent roots. For academic theologians, textual criticism was the most fundamental of skills, and the first of the 'historical-critical tools' to challenge received opinion (and the 'received text' of the Bible). Quite naturally the editors of 'critical editions' of the Bible, from the Renaissance humanists until quite recent times, took as their goal the recovery of the *original* text behind the multiplicity of manuscript readings and other ancient witnesses. When modernist scholars advanced to 'the higher criticism', it seemed obvious that they should want to discover the original *meaning* of the text. The Renaissance watchcry, 'to the sources', played its role, but so did post-Reformation polemics, for the *sola scriptura* watchword of the Reformers was transmuted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into a historical search for the primal revelation, to be freed from the distortions and corruptions accreted through centuries of ecclesiastical tradition. Johann Gottfried Herder's philosophy of history was particularly important in this

[15] Alkier, *Urchristentum*, p. 111.

redefinition of the quest for the original spirit of Christianity.[16] Formally it was a variation on a theme developed by heresiologists in the ancient church, who deployed the Pauline metaphor of the church as a pure bride liable to seduction by alien heresies. This scheme implied a punctiliar model of revelation: a historic moment when the truth manifested itself in the human world.

On the other hand, the ancient church had also developed a counter-model, according to which the revelation in the single Christ event had followed long centuries of preparation, both in the general advance of human consciousness and in the particular history of God's election, formation, judgement and redemption of the special people Israel. Philosophical apologetics on the one hand and a typological reading of the Old Testament on the other produced a complex master narrative, a 'history of salvation', and this *Heilsgeschichte* was part of the intellectual baggage brought along on the new journey to *Religionsgeschichte*. The notion that truth lies not at the beginning but in the historical process itself received a new and powerful formulation in the philosophy of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831). It is difficult to overestimate Hegel's influence on liberal Protestant theology in Germany in the last half of the nineteenth century. Moreover, it coincided with other evolutionary models – not least the new Darwinian perspective on biological speciation that was quickly making its way across the English Channel – to produce several variations on the theme of progressive revelation. While the quest for *Urchristentum* privileged a particular moment in the ancient past, the progressivists tended to privilege the present or an already dawning future as the moment when the revelatory process would bear its ultimate fruit.

The new historians of religion were not Hegelians but neo-Kantians, and they generally eschewed sweeping doctrines of historical evolution. Nevertheless, they did share some of the evolutionary spirit of their intellectual context. Their propensity to write history in terms of binary oppositions – above all the opposition between Judaism and Hellenism – was indebted to Hegelian reading of historical development as the externalisation of the dialectic of thought, in which every thesis evokes an antithesis and progress occurs through some synthesis of the two, becoming in turn the thesis for a new antithesis. A generation earlier than the Göttingen group, F. C. Baur and his 'Tübingen School' had famously deployed the dialectical framework to explain the emergence of 'early Catholicism' from the opposition between 'Jewish Christianity' and 'Gentile Christianity'. Variations of this scheme, combined with a cultural map of the expansion of the Christian movement

[16] Alkier, *Urchristentum*, chap. 3.

from the confines of 'Palestinian Judaism' to the 'Hellenistic Judaism' of the Diaspora to the 'Hellenism' of the broader society of the eastern Roman provincial cities, figured largely in the work of several of the History of Religions group, notably Bousset and his younger colleague Wilhelm Heitmüller.[17] Even more important for their understanding was an evolutionary model for the development of ancient Israel's religion. Julius Wellhausen, building on earlier work by W. M. L. de Wette, his own observations of the religion of modern Bedouin and his reconstruction of the sequence of the biblical sources, posited a fundamental opposition between prophetic religion and priestly religion. The prophets, authors of the creative and original impulses in Israel's religion, produced the 'ethical monotheism' that was Israel's highest gift to Western civilisation. The priests were responsible for the defensive ethnocentrism and legalism that, in this view of things, characterised post-exilic Judaea and, of course, the religion of the rabbis, 'late Judaism'. It was only in the new movement of apocalypticism that the innovative capacity of ethical monotheism re-emerged, and its highest manifestation was in the apocalyptic prophecy of Jesus.[18] In the romantic dimension of this scheme – privileging the earlier, the rural, the folk religion out of which the prophets supposedly emerged, and the 'charismatic' figure – that heroic persona so important for Troeltsch and his friends finds a broader context. This figure is not isolated from the stream of history but stands precisely in the evolutionary development of ethical, personal religion that begins with the classical prophets and, in emergent Christianity, subsumes within itself also Platonism and Stoicism.

While evolutionary schemes and the drive to discover origins both helped shape the thought of the History of Religions School, the focus of their research was on quite particular questions: how did the peculiar rituals of baptism and the Eucharist develop? How did it happen that the Jewish prophet Jesus came to be worshipped as a divine being? Whence came the notion of a general resurrection followed by a final judgement of all humankind? What were the sources of the bizarre imagery in the Apocalypse? Students of religion in many places and in several different academic disciplines had begun to recognise that the key move for answering such questions was comparison across religious boundaries. For the Göttingen group this meant a sharp break with Ritschlian biblical theology, which sought to explain New Testament

[17] Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*; Heitmüller, 'Paulus und Jesus'.

[18] The scheme is clearly set forth in a late representative of the history of religions position, R. Kittel, *Religion*, lectures delivered in 1920 at the University of Uppsala. It may be found in many of the articles in the famous *Theologisches Wörterbuch* produced by his son Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich; cf. G. Kittel, *Lexicographia Sacra*.

religion as a direct continuation of the religion of the Old Testament. Instead, as Hermann Gunkel explained in lectures to pastors in 1901, the historians of religion insisted that the 'influence of foreign religions' must be taken into account at every step. New Testament religion itself was syncretistic, and the foreign influences upon it came initially through Judaism, which could not be understood from the Hebrew Scriptures alone.[19]

By looking for the precise paths through which 'foreign' elements entered the thought world of Jews and early Christians, the historians of religion distinguished their mode of comparative research from the trans-cultural comparisons practised in other circles, such as the 'phenomenological' approach emerging in the Netherlands and elsewhere. The latter identified certain types of religious phenomena which recurred in different religious traditions in different times and places, and sought to uncover their common functioning and deep meaning.[20] The historians of religion, by contrast, were interested less in analogies or parallels than in influences and antecedents. They thus focused on religious movements they believed to be active in the immediate cultural environment of early Christianity, that is, the mix of cultures in the age after Alexander in the lands bordering the eastern Mediterranean.

The identification and description of those religious movements constituted one of the most creative, influential, but ultimately most problematic of the contributions which the History of Religions School made to modern scholarship. Archaeology and philology were adding to the data available for understanding the world of the early Roman empire at an accelerating pace. As always, establishing a taxonomy for such discoveries – learning which bits of evidence belonged together in the map of ancient cultures – was a critical desideratum before a historian could incorporate them into a meaningful narrative. However, it was all too easy to think of the names scholars gave to constellations of evidence as pointing to real entities, having their own histories and able to produce effects in the world.

Many of the discoveries resulted from the translation into European languages of documents that lay unedited in libraries, or were newly added to

[19] The lectures were later published as a programmatic book, Gunkel, *Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verständnis*.

[20] For example, Van Gennep, *Rites de passage*. The full flowering of the movement is represented in the classic work by Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, originally published in German in 1933. The move of Joachim Wach to the University of Chicago in 1945 brought the phenomenological approach to North America, further developed at Chicago by Joseph Kitagawa and Mircea Eliade. Although the programme was called the History of Religions, for the first half-century of its existence it resembled more what the Germans called *Religionswissenschaft* than *Religionsgeschichte*.

collections by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travellers. Among these were some resembling in their literary form the biblical books of Daniel and the Apocalypse of John. It was from the incipit of the latter that scholars named the genre of visionary literature, which soon was seen to include portions of other biblical books, such as Isaiah 24–27, Zechariah 12–14, Mark 13 and the apocryphal 2 Esdras 3–14, also known as 4 Ezra. Other, extra-canonical works were becoming known as manuscripts in Syriac, Coptic, old church Slavonic, Ethiopic and other languages were found to include 'apocalypses' attributed to such biblical heroes as Enoch, Abraham, Baruch and even Adam. The historians of religion took the further step of assuming that works of this literary genre were products of a specific religious movement within post-exilic Judaism. The origins of that movement were debated; various scholars posited influences from classical Israelite prophecy, from the wisdom movement shared by post-exilic Israel with its neighbours, or from Babylonian, Iranian, Greek, or Egyptian antecedents. As we have seen, the History of Religions School attributed a unique importance to 'apocalypticism' (*die Apokalyptik*) as the primary context of Jesus' own identity and career – though oddly they and their successors, notably Rudolf Bultmann, showed a deep resistance to apocalyptic readings of Paul.

Nor did the young historians neglect the 'Hellenistic' and 'Oriental' dimensions of the syncretistic culture that they saw as Christianity's matrix. Archaeological work in Greek and Roman temple sites, as well as new philological studies, stimulated new attempts to uncover the secrets of ancient initiatory mysteries. Critical editions of such esoteric documents as the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the growing accumulation of magical recipes, dream interpretation and astrological charts found in hoards of ancient papyri led to new theories about popular religious practice outside the official institutions of temples and priesthoods. All these were pressed into service in attempts to understand, for example, the miracles of Jesus, the 'charismatic' phenomena mentioned in Paul's letters and the early Christian sacraments.

Alongside apocalypticism and the Hellenistic mystery cults, no construct of the History of Religions School was more lastingly influential nor, in the long run, more problematic than the notion of Gnosticism. Researchers were intrigued by certain recurring motifs in esoteric tracts found in newly discovered documents such as the Bruce Codex and the Askew Codex, both acquired by the British Museum in the late eighteenth century, a Coptic codex acquired by the Berlin Staatsmuseum in 1896, and, above all, in the sacred literature of the Mandaeans, an obscure baptising sect still practising its ancient rituals in modern Iraq and Iran and translated into German by the Semiticist Mark

Lidzbarski in the first decades of the twentieth century. They sought a link with similar motifs found in descriptions of ancient Christian heresies by their orthodox opponents and in the New Testament itself. Irenaeus, the second-century bishop of Lyons, had lumped together the wide assortment of 'heresies' whose genealogy he constructed under the tag from 1 Timothy 6:20, 'the falsely named knowledge [*gnōsis*]'. Taking their cue from Irenaeus, the religious historians posited one vast but polymorphic religious movement, which they named *Die Gnosis*, persisting across centuries before and after the birth of Christianity, and taking on different outward forms as it adapted itself by what they called 'pseudomorphosis' to various traditions. Among the motifs common to this Gnostic movement were the notion that the material world was the result of a fall or devolution from a primal state of light and unity into multiplicity and darkness; the image of a saviour sent down from the heavenly world of light into the lower world of darkness; and the concept of salvation as the soul's escape from the material world, made possible by Gnosis, the recovery of personal insight into the soul's origins and the way of recovery of primal unity – available only to those who were by nature of one substance with the saviour. Wherever variants of these motifs were discovered in the early literature of the Christian movement – and they seemed most obvious in the Fourth Gospel and in the letters of Paul – the historians of religion found evidence for the Gnostic movement or of opposition to it.

The influence of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* on European and North American biblical scholarship of the twentieth century was enormous. Even now, when many of the particular hypotheses advanced by its members have been disconfirmed by subsequent discoveries or research, and when the fundamental assumptions and methods of modernist historicism are called into question from several quarters, the questions raised by the historians of religion continue to set the agenda for research into the history of Israel's religion and the development of early Christianity to a surprising degree. Even scholars who reject most of the findings and much of the method of the History of Religions School agree that our understanding of 'biblical religion' can never be the same as it was before their work, which can only be replaced by better history.

5

The archaeological study of the Bible

KEITH WHITELAM

Introduction

The archaeological exploration of Palestine has been inseparable from the study of the Bible since the time of the first Western visitors to the region. As early as the second century CE Christian pilgrims had travelled to Palestine attempting to discover the locations associated with Jesus' ministry and Passion, to trace the route of the Exodus, or to stand on the sites of other biblical events. The empress Helena, Constantine's mother, famously visited Palestine in 326 CE in order to determine the sites of the nativity, Calvary and the Holy Sepulchre. Such early attempts to discover the sites associated with biblical events are the roots of a long-term project that would see the Bible and archaeology used as the ideological justification for the metaphorical and physical appropriation of Palestine by the West.

The same aspirations drove the development of exploration and archaeology in the region following the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798 and the subsequent struggle by European powers for control of Palestine. European control of the region allowed many more travellers to fulfil their dream of visiting and 'experiencing' the events of the Bible. What these Western visitors, including missionaries and scholars who were able to conduct a much more thorough investigation of Palestine, experienced was a timeless land – 'the Holy Land' – in which the events of the Bible were continually played out and in which the contemporary inhabitants had little or no value except as biblical extras. The dream of treading the streets down which Jesus walked or standing on the spots associated with the biblical events was, according to an advert for one of Thomas Cook's tours of the Holy Land, 'so easily and so pleasantly convertible into reality'.

Before the advent of scientific excavation it was the numerous, popular travel narratives by tourists, missionaries and scholars that brought to life the sites, sounds and smells of this biblical landscape for a wealthy literate

audience in Europe and North America. One of the most popular was William M. Thomson's *The Land and the Book*. The author, a missionary for thirty years in Syria and Palestine, acted as an authoritative guide through the landscape from Beirut to Jerusalem. The narrative is concerned much less with the contemporary landscape and its inhabitants than an imaginative geography as the locus for the biblical events. Yet it was Edward Robinson's *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai, and Arabia Petraea* – accounts of his travels to Syria and Palestine in 1838 and 1852 – that was to establish the scholarly study of the sites and landscape of Palestine and its relationship to the Bible. He and Eli Smith evaluated modern Arabic place names in combination with their own explorations in order to identify authentic biblical sites out of the array of legendary claims. Robinson, who like many others dismissed the present inhabitants as ignorant and barbarous, came to Palestine expecting to find support for his conservative views on the Bible.

The number and popularity of travel narratives by tourists, missionaries and scholars bear witness to the fact that reading and understanding the Bible had become dependent on seeing and experiencing the landscape on which the biblical events had been played out. For those unable to travel to Palestine, these popular narratives brought the sites and landscape of Palestine to life in their parlours and living rooms. Protestant missionaries and scholars, along with their audiences, were interested primarily in the biblical world rather than other periods. Such popular and scholarly accounts were used to lay claim to Palestine as the rightful inheritance of the various Western powers through their religious connections.

The growing archaeological exploration of the region and, in particular, the emergence of 'biblical archaeology' from the late nineteenth century onwards offered the promise that the events of the biblical narratives could be verified by the spade of the archaeologist. The rise of 'biblical archaeology', which came to dominate and control the archaeological investigation of Palestine, demonstrates how closely intertwined the study of the Bible and archaeology had become. Yet despite a seemingly harmonious beginning – whereby archaeological discoveries were seen as some kind of external, objective control and an antidote in scholarly disputes with the proponents of so-called Higher Criticism who questioned the historical veracity of many biblical narratives – the relationship between archaeology and the study of the Bible has been complex and often troubled. The way in which this relationship has developed has been shaped and influenced by its worldly affiliations: the social, religious and political currents of the day. The various movements that have taken place in the archaeological study of Palestine from the nineteenth

century to the present need to be understood as part of the intellectual and political currents of the last two centuries.

The imperial imagination

European expansion opened up Palestine to much more extensive archaeological exploration. The European powers that were competing to control the land for strategic reasons were also competing to own and control its past. Political and economic power alone is never sufficient to maintain imperial adventures: cultural power is also required, and what the British, French and Germans were trying to do was to claim Palestine as their own God-given patrimony. 'Biblical archaeology' provided the ideological justification to further the imperial claims of the competing Western powers in the region. It has been termed 'a quiet extension of the "Eastern Question" waged on the battlefield of the past'.[1]

It was in this context that the great European national archaeological societies were founded – the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) in 1865, the Deutsche Palästina-Verein (German Palestine Society) in 1877 and the École biblique in 1890 – and the first excavations of Palestinian sites were undertaken. Just like the tourists on Cook's tours, these early archaeologists were looking to confirm the biblical stories and were primarily interested in the biblical past, ignoring previous periods such as the Bronze Age or later periods from the Arab invasion through to the Ottoman period. The Bible acted as the guide book for pilgrim, traveller and scholar alike in their exploration of what had become known as 'the land of the Bible'. A huge number of popular and scholarly accounts were published during this time that helped to justify this claim to Palestine as the rightful inheritance of the various Western powers through its religious connections.

Palestine's strategic importance to Britain in the struggle with France for control of the region was a crucial factor in the founding of the PEF in 1865. The Archbishop of York, at a public meeting to set up the Fund, famously claimed:

> This country of Palestine belongs to *you* and to *me*, it is essentially ours. It was given to the Father of Israel in the words: 'Walk the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee.' *We* mean to walk through Palestine in the length and in the breadth of it, because that land has been given unto us. It is the land from which comes news of our Redemption. It

[1] Silberman, *Digging for God and Country*, p. 4.

> is the land towards which we turn as the foundation of all our hopes; it is the land to which we may look with as true a patriotism as we do to this dear old England, which we love so much.

The great monument to the PEF is the trigonometrical Survey of Western Palestine that produced the first detailed, scientific maps of the region. It was designed on the one hand to illuminate the land of the Bible and identify sites associated with the biblical past. On the other hand, it was funded by the War Office as part of Britain's strategic interests in the region and proved invaluable in Allenby's campaign in 1917 and was carried out by officers in the Royal Engineers, including Wilson, Conder, Kitchener and T. E. Lawrence. The map was essential to archaeological exploration, but it also allowed the territory to be controlled and ordered. The establishment of the PEF and the projects that it subsequently commissioned illustrate the potent mix of military power and religious conviction that underpinned the archaeological study of the Bible.

The work of Wilson and the Royal Engineers in Jerusalem (1867–8) was an early attempt to prove the historical veracity of the biblical narratives as well as a response to the earlier excavations by de Saulcy for the French in 1863. Renan, who had accompanied the French expedition into Palestine and Syria, excavated at Byblos, Sidon and Tyre in the 1860s. Germany, a close ally of the Ottoman government, made huge investments following Kaiser Wilhelm II's ceremonial entrance into Jerusalem on 29 October 1898, a direct challenge to British claims: Sellin began work at Tell Taanach, Sellin, Schumacher and Benziger at Megiddo, and Schumacher at Jericho. This investment in archaeology was mirrored in the construction of railways in Palestine and from Damascus to Mecca. As German power and influence expanded in the region, it was mirrored by its growing ascendancy in biblical archaeology.

Although the USA did not have the same strategic interests as Britain, American influence had already been seen in the popular travel narratives of Thomson and Robinson and the founding of the short-lived American Palestine Exploration Society in 1870 as a defence of the Bible against scepticism. As the USA emerged as a world power towards the end of the nineteenth century – it was in 1892 that the European powers upgraded the rank of their diplomatic representatives to Washington from minister to ambassador – so its involvement in the archaeological exploration of Palestine grew. The geopolitical shifts taking place at the beginning of the twentieth century were mirrored in the bipolarity of biblical scholarship which emerged in the early decades of the century with competing German and American scholarly traditions, while British influence was in decline. The proposal in 1895 to establish

an American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem was, like the other competing national institutions, justified in terms of the advancement of scholarly knowledge, the strengthening of religious faith, and national pride.

The great figures of this early period of archaeological and topographical exploration inevitably interpreted what they saw and what they found through the prism of the dominant assumptions of their own day. Although this included notions of social evolution that no longer hold sway and were forged in the political and religious conflicts of their own time, this is not to underestimate the scholarly achievements and advancements that were made. This was the period of the classic historical geographies of George Adam Smith and Robinson that laid the foundations for further archaeological investigation. The PEF Survey of Western Palestine and later southern Palestine was a landmark achievement in cartography. The last few decades of the nineteenth century saw the beginnings of a more scientific approach to archaeological excavation with Flinders Petrie, an employee of the PEF, recognising the importance of changes in pottery for dating during his work in Egypt and at Tel el-Hesi. Reisner's careful work at Samaria laid the foundations for stratigraphic excavation, the understanding of the tell as a product of human activity and change, and the importance of full recording.

The period of archaeological theatre

The period from 1920s onwards is often referred to as 'the golden age' of biblical archaeology – a time when many of the major sites were excavated, often with spectacular results, and many of the great figures of archaeology and biblical studies shaped their disciplines. The British victory in Palestine opened up the country for archaeological exploration in ways that had not been possible under Ottoman control. Although the military conflict was at an end with the establishment of the British Mandate, however temporarily, the struggle for the control and interpretation of Palestine's past was far from over. The terms of the Mandate granted all member nations of the League of Nations equal excavation rights, thus allowing archaeologists from many different countries access to Palestine and thereby increasing the interpretative competition.

It was also a period when archaeological techniques were further refined with Albright's pioneering pottery analysis at Tell Beit Mirsim establishing a chronological framework and Kenyon's development of the Wheeler–Kenyon method at Jericho and Jerusalem with careful observation and recording of strata. The notion of 'a golden age', however, reflects a feeling of nostalgia for

a period of scholarship that seemed to have provided incontrovertible proof for the historicity of the biblical narratives. It is a term used longingly in more recent times when the results of this period have been called into question and biblical scholarship has fractured into a myriad of voices.

It has also been termed, perhaps more appropriately, the era of 'archaeological theatre'.[2] A time when figures such as Garstang, Albright, Kenyon, Wright, de Vaux, Yadin, Mazar and many others became actors in a drama whose stages were the massive tells of Palestine. The sites at which they had chosen to work had been selected for their biblical connections: Beth-Shean, Beth-Shemesh, Et-Tell (Ai), Gezer, Jericho, Jerusalem, Megiddo, Samaria, Tell Beit Mirsim (mistakenly identified as Debir), Tell el-Ful (identified as Gibeah of Saul), Tell ed-Duweir (Lachish) and Tell en-Nasbeh (Mizpah). As the various layers were peeled back, archaeologists, scholars, their benefactors and Western audiences believed that what they were seeing was the biblical past revealed.

However, public and private support and finance for these ventures depended on results. Museum-sponsored digs such as Fisher's at Beth-Shean and his University of Chicago dig at Megiddo – financed by a $1 million gift from John D. Rockefeller – looked for total exposure and museum-quality objects. The reporting of finds was often sensationalised in order to stimulate interest and guarantee further funding. It was reported that Garstang had uncovered the walls of Jericho miraculously destroyed by Joshua – a fact that Kenyon's methods later disproved – Megiddo (Tell el-Mutesellim) was identified as the site of Armageddon, while the discovery of stone pillars with holes at the same site was reported as the discovery of massive stone hitching posts to which horses in Solomon's stables had been tethered.

The moment of Allenby's military triumph in 1917 coincided with Albright's arrival in Palestine a year later to begin his pioneering work. It marks the period when American scholarship was beginning the definition of a distinctive biblical interpretation, and the point when American imperial power began to challenge and replace that of Britain. James Montgomery, in his presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature in that same year, stated that 'the opportunity has come for American scholarship to assert its independence and attempt to work out its equality with that of other nations of the earth'. The next thirty years or more saw the affirmation of American political and cultural power. In biblical archaeology this affirmation of certainty was reflected in the emphasis on 'objectivity' and 'facts'.

[2] Davidson, 'Biblical Archaeology and the Press', p. 105.

The Wilsonian era was a period of unwavering faith in American exceptionalism and progressivism, including the tendency to see humankind in terms of superior and inferior races. This is reflected in the triumphant tone of Bright's classic history of Israel, the Albrightian theology of history with its confident evolutionism – he believed it was natural that the (superior) Israelites should replace the (inferior) Canaanites – and the pronouncements of the biblical theology movement about finding the acts of God within history. Archaeology for Albright and his followers was the search for 'realia', objective material facts with which to defend the Bible at a time when fundamentalist–modernist debates were rife. The period of American exceptionalism is reflected in the presentation of the uniqueness of ancient Israel, whether its material features such as the four-roomed house or collared-rim ware – considered to be unique markers of Israelite ethnicity – its political and social organisation – for George Ernest Wright it was a unique mutation – or its theology and sacred literature. It is also reflected in the search for the origins of the state and the presentation of the monarchy of David and Solomon as the foundation of a state in the image of Wilsonian America, a reflection of the belief that less-developed peoples gave way to political modernisation. The works of this period in American scholarship are imbued with the language of 'manifest destiny', the frontier and democracy.

The period of the Mandate had seen increasing Zionist immigration into Palestine and the beginnings of Jewish excavations at Tiberias and the discovery of a Byzantine synagogue in the early 1920s. It was the beginnings of the realisation that archaeological remains offered a potent rallying point for Jewish nationalism. While the Zionist movement sought to transform Palestine into a Jewish national home, the work of the archaeologists offered physical proof of an ancient connection to the land. The Zionist movement from the nineteenth century onwards drew on the construction of ancient Israel's history by Western scholarship to show that they were returning to and reclaiming their 'historical' homeland and eventually reasserting their right to a state. In a sense they were usurping the earlier claim of the European powers and taking over their ideological claim to the land. Thus the words of the Proclamation of Independence of the State of Israel issued on 14 May 1948 declared that this was a return to 'the land of their fathers' and 'the re-establishment of the Jewish State'.

Archaeology in the 1950s in Israel played an important role in connecting the newly founded nation with its ancient past and establishing its claim to the land. For many of the public who participated in digs at weekends, the discovery of walls, floors and artefacts was tangible proof of their connection to

the land. But it was no longer Europe's god-given patrimony but Israel's – the Bible was now Israel's title deed to the land. The Israeli-led excavations of the period were part of the 'archaeological theatre': Arad, Beersheba, Beth-Shean, Hazor, Jerusalem, Masada, Megiddo, Tell Dan. As at Masada, the interpretation of finds was part of the process of nation building and the forging of a new national identity. Biblical archaeology, formerly the site of conflict among the European powers, was to become an ideological weapon in the struggle for the land with the Palestinians.

The fracturing of the consensus

It was the upheavals of the 1960s that eventually led to new intellectual currents which undermined the authority and the stability of established disciplines and their previously thought 'assured results'. The failure of the Wilsonian doctrine and the wave of anti-Vietnam protests led in turn to the 1960s counter-culture, the New Left, and eventually Reaganite and Thatcherite anti-statist conservatism. Biblical studies and biblical archaeology were not immune from these movements as the seemingly assured results of Albrightian scholarship were called into question, alongside the emergence of indeterminacy in literary studies.

The Six Day War in 1967 was a transformative moment in the Middle East, and in Israeli society in particular. The capture of east Jerusalem – along with the Rockefeller Museum and the Dead Sea Scrolls – and the seizure of the West Bank, Golan Heights and Sinai Peninsula opened up areas traditionally associated with the emergence of Israel and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah to archaeological exploration – despite the fact that it was illegal under international law – to a new generation of Israeli archaeologists. The search for ancient Israel that followed led to a shift away from the focus on major tells to regional surveys and the excavation of smaller one-period sites. Ironically, the results of the surveys showing that the small villages founded at the beginning of the Iron Age were indigenous undermined notions of external conquest or infiltration and raised serious questions about the historicity of the biblical narratives and the relationship between the text and archaeology. This has resulted in a radical revision of previous views, including the questioning of the nature or even very existence of the so-called 'united monarchy' of David and Solomon.

The revisionist stance towards Israelite history arose in the context of the dissolution of centralised structures with the break-up of the Soviet Union, the explosion of separatism, the rise of new and exclusive forms of nationalism

in some parts of Europe, and the reconfiguration of power structures within the EEC and the rest of Europe and the USA. The structures that had led to the bipolar political world that provided the context for the polarisation of American and German biblical scholarship in the early twentieth century have fragmented and been reconfigured, leading to radically altered perspectives on the Israelite past. The key areas of debate on Israelite history have shifted from the transitions through tribe, chiefdom and state, which dominated earlier scholarship, to the problems of ethnicity and identity at a time of increasing immigration in Europe and questions of multiculturalism and cultural difference in the USA.

The shift in politics to the right in the USA with the election of George W. Bush and the success of Likud in Israeli elections marked a return to the intellectual climate of the 1950s and a response to the revisionist interpretation of the Bible and archaeology. This has led to a reassertion of the ability to identify 'Israelite material' culture and a confidence in archaeology to produce objective facts by which to verify the biblical accounts. This is reflected in claims to have discovered the palace of David in Jerusalem or the claim that the discovery of an abecedary embedded in the wall of a building at Tel Zayit is confirmation of a centralised, bureaucratic state centred on Jerusalem at the time of David and Solomon. It is a return to the sensationalisation of claims during the period of 'archaeological theatre' and a similar rush to certainty that led to earlier claims that the four-room house or collared-rim ware were objective markers of 'Israelite' identity. The rise of the biblical history movement and the so-called new biblical archaeology is a reflection of nostalgia for the certainties – culturally and politically – of the 1950s.

The increasing control of Ultra-Orthodox groups in excavations in 'the city of David' in the village of Silwan makes explicit the ideological uses of biblical archaeology. Increasingly, it is being used to underpin the Jewish settlers' claims to the area and to stimulate Bible-oriented tourism. Ze'ev Herzog's letter in the Israeli daily newspaper *Ha'aretz* in 1999, entitled 'Deconstructing the Walls of Jericho', created a political storm. He was reiterating what was a fairly standard view within biblical studies: the Iron Age villages in the hill country were indigenous settlements and not evidence of external conquest, and Jerusalem at the time when it was supposed to be the capital of a major state under David was no more than a small highland town. The fact that he was denounced for undermining the security of Israel and providing ammunition to Israel's enemies made explicit the ideological uses of the Bible and archaeology. It mirrors the origins of biblical archaeology when the European powers used it as an ideological claim to the land and tourists came to see

their religious roots. The archaeological interpretation of the Bible constantly reflects its political and culture contexts.

Archaeology as an academic discipline in Palestine emerged amidst the struggle for hegemony in the region among the Western powers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The national traditions of scholarship were in competition just like the powers they represented; the political conflicts are mirrored in the contest between the British, French and German traditions, followed by the rise and eventual domination of American scholarship. With the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, Israeli archaeology developed its own national tradition, drawing on the Western scholarship from which it emerged. The political entanglements of archaeology have become increasingly contentious as it has been used to justify the occupation and annexation of Palestinian land. In recent years the establishment of departments of archaeology within the Palestinian universities has seen a growth of a Palestinian national tradition that draws upon archaeology to justify its claim to the land. The troubled relationship between the Bible and archaeology continues: at times seemingly in harmony, at times in conflict, reinforcing or challenging competing nationalist narratives by turns.

Just as post-colonial critiques have demonstrated how earlier scholarship was influenced by and implicated in the colonial enterprise, particularly reflected in its confident evolutionism, so it is important to recognise that current scholarship, of whatever flavour, is equally enmeshed in its own world. Scholars can only interpret the past through the lens of the concepts and assumptions of their own time. In retrospect, such concepts and assumptions become outdated and, at worst, misleading. At the time, they may have stimulated new insights and developments in scholarship. Looking back, very often they have also contributed to a misconstruction of the past. The assumptions of nineteenth-century Europe no longer convince, but equally it is important to question the assumptions that have driven twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship and the ways in which they reflect the changing dynamics of global politics.

6

Source, form, redaction and literary criticism of the Bible

JANICE CAPEL ANDERSON

In 1901 Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932) published the first edition of his celebrated Genesis commentary in Germany.[1] Often this event is seen as a landmark, putting a new method of biblical criticism, form criticism, on the scholarly map. In the preface to his commentary Gunkel is at pains to deny that he is an enemy of 'literary criticism' (*Literarkritik*). By literary criticism Gunkel meant what scholars now term source criticism, criticism that seeks to uncover literary or documentary sources lying behind biblical texts. But how 'literary' is literary criticism? And are the methods that followed in its wake, form and redaction criticism, any more or less literary? Today scholars reserve the term literary criticism for approaches influenced by contemporary literary criticism as taught under the banner of Comparative Literature or of a single language such as English or Spanish. Concepts such as plot, point of view, gendered reading and hybridity take centre stage. In that frame, source, form and redaction criticism are historical rather than literary approaches. They focus on the world behind the text rather than the text itself or its reception. Nonetheless, concerns with style, composition and aesthetics play a role in each. The story of these criticisms I will tell will touch on how they view author, text and audience. It will also focus on narrative and trace a move from the dominance of German to Anglophone scholarship and beyond.

Source criticism

The *Literarkritik* Gunkel denied opposing was rooted in a search for the origins of the Torah or Pentateuch. Source criticism presented and presents a challenge to Jews and Christians holding Mosaic authorship to be critical to Torah's divine inspiration and authority as well as to literary unity grounded

[1] Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, ed. D. W. Nowak (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901).

in that authorship. Jean Astruc (1684–1766), a father of source criticism, sought to defend Mosaic authorship, arguing that Moses had used documents from pre-Mosaic times. Astruc and many future critics identified written sources lying behind composite texts. Source critics see biblical texts more like patchwork quilts than seamless wholes.[2] The features that mark the hypothetical sources are changes in vocabulary such as differing names for the deity, repetition, changes in style or theological content, anachronisms, inconsistencies and seemingly awkward transitions. Rather than authors, there are editors or 'redactors'. Assessments of the editors range from clumsy collectors setting contradictory passages cheek by jowl to creative and purposeful weavers of a tapestry. The experience of reading involves puzzlement and contradiction, which critics find more or less resolved in the identification of sources. These sources seem more coherent than the final text itself.[3] This unity, however, does not always last, with sources further subdivided.

The prime example of source criticism is the documentary hypothesis. Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) advocated this hypothesis in articles on the composition of the Hexateuch (Genesis–Joshua) and in his *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*.[4] His work dominates scholarly analysis to the present day – whether by assent, modification, or rejection. Wellhausen sought to identify and date sources lying behind the Hexateuch, not only because its compositional history was a long-standing conundrum, but also because these sources formed the basis for a history of Israel. Relying on the work of predecessors, Wellhausen argued that three main sources or documents were combined to form the Hexateuch. The earliest source, 'J', used the name YHWH (Jehovah) for God. It was skilfully combined with 'E', which used the name Elohim for God, to form JE or the Jehovist source. Wellhausen dated the Jehovist to a 'golden age of Hebrew literature … the period of the kings and prophets'.[5] It preceded 'D', dated to the reign of Josiah. The last major source was the Priestly Code, which later scholars designated 'P', dated to the post-exilic period. For Wellhausen the Priestly Code with a focus on law and cult

[2] Scholars often use textile imagery. The patchwork quilt imagery is found, for example, in Henry J. Cadbury, 'Between Jesus and the Gospels', *HTR* 16 (1923), pp. 81–92 at p. 90.

[3] John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), p. 42 and Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative*, p. 8.

[4] Articles included 'Die Composition des Hexateuchs', *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie* 21 (1876), pp. 392–450, 531–602 and 22 (1877), pp. 407–79. The first edition of the *Prolegomena* was *Geschichte Israels* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1878). The second edition was *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1883), trans. John Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies as *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1885); online http://books.google.com/books?id=f061boTKi–UC&printsec=titlepage#PPP1,M1.

[5] Wellhausen, *Prolegomena* (English translation), p. 9.

represented degeneration into a ritualistic and legalistic early Judaism. This account of the sources and the picture of Israelite history Wellhausen painted both reflect a longing for authentic origins and capture a secularised Lutheran contrast between Law and Gospel.[6] They also resonated with his personal experience. Early in the *Prolegomena* Wellhausen recounts finding troubling the chronological and conceptual priority of the 'Law' over the prophets and historical writings during his student days. 'At last, in the course of a casual visit in Göttingen in the summer of 1867', he writes, 'I learned through Ritschl that Karl Heinrich Graf placed the Law later than the Prophets, and, almost without knowing his reasons for the hypothesis, I was prepared to accept it.'[7]

The Humpty-Dumpty of the text was put back together into a historical whole that made sense, at least to scholars in the German Protestant tradition and to others who identified with a lively early Israelite tradition rather than what they saw as a moribund Judaism. Following Wellhausen, they could preserve the Hebrew Bible as a cultural patrimony, even while challenging traditional religious understandings and the power of the institutional church to control interpretation. Unsurprisingly, many Jewish scholars find Wellhausen's picture unacceptable, not only because of the picture it painted of the law and Judaism, but also because he fractured the text, reading many features not as examples of literary and theological artistry, but as evidence of sources.[8]

New Testament source critics, like their Hebrew Bible counterparts, viewed and view differences in style, vocabulary and themes, as well as repetition and editorial 'seams', as evidence for sources. A central focus is the synoptic problem where similarities as well as differences between Matthew, Mark and Luke provoke analysis.[9] Ultimately, the two-source hypothesis emerged in the nineteenth century and became the dominant solution. It argues for Marcan priority. Matthew and Luke used Mark, accounting for passages that appear in all three as well as similarities in order. Their second source Q (in German *Quelle* or source) is a hypothetical collection of sayings of Jesus derived from

[6] Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible*, p. 13.

[7] Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, pp. 3–4.

[8] Cf. Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*; Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible*, pp. 10–15, 21–9, 41–5; Lou H. Silberman, 'Wellhausen and Judaism', *Semeia* 25 (1982), pp. 75–82; Brian M. Britt, *Rewriting Moses: The Narrative Eclipse of the Text* (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004), pp. 64–8; and Diane Banks, *Writing the History of Israel* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2006), pp. 63–7. Jewish scholars such as Umberto Cassuto (*The Documentary Hypothesis*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Shalem Press, 2006)) and Robert Alter (*The Art of Biblical Narrative*) see source criticism as misreading.

[9] See Christopher Tuckett, 'The Synoptic Problem', in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. VI (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 263–70; Mark Goodacre, *The Synoptic Problem: A Way through the Maze*, BS 80 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

passages common to Matthew and Luke, but not found in Mark. Like the documentary hypothesis, the two-source theory was controversial, initially because it challenged traditional views of authorship and literary unity. The evangelists are not simply eyewitnesses whose accounts have a coherence grounded in their authors' experiences of events. Again, like the documentary hypothesis, New Testament source criticism funds reconstructions of history. Scholars, for example, reconstruct Marcan and Q communities.

Form criticism / form history

Early source critics acknowledged that oral traditions probably underlay written sources, but tended to blink at the possibility of recovering them. Form critics thought it not only possible but advisable. Classic form criticism views many biblical texts as the products of oral tradition in which small units circulated.[10] Tradition cast the small units in typical oral genres. Each genre arose in a specific social context or setting in life (*Sitz im Leben*). The Gospels, for example, contain traditional stories or sayings cast in genres such as parables and proverbs. These circulated orally in the early church in contexts such as teaching and preaching before the evangelists set them in a narrative framework. The evangelists, however, were not true authors. It was the *Volk* or community who were the true authors. The Gospels, thus, were not high literary art produced by self-conscious, individual authors of genius but the products of popular tradition. The focus, as the German label *Formgeschichte* (form history) indicates, is on the history lying behind the text. Similarly, the focus is not on the text as a unified whole, but on its parts. Finally, the reception of the final text is not highlighted. Instead, form critics are interested in the social contexts of oral genres. Here an imagined audience may be in view: the family around the hearth, the participant in the cult or the congregation listening to a sermon. If source criticism is literary in the sense that it looks for stylistic differences, differing vocabulary and so on in order to reconstruct coherent literary sources, form criticism is literary in the sense that it seeks to discover the style and genres of oral literature embedded in written texts. It does this in order to write a more complete history, both a literary history of the genres and the history of Israel or the early church. Given this background, we return to Germany and the form critic Hermann Gunkel.

[10] The term classic distinguishes it from later changes in the understanding of form criticism. See Klaus Berger, 'New Testament Form Criticism', in Hayes (ed.), *Methods of Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 121–6 and Sweeney and Zvi (eds.), *Changing Face of Form Criticism*. For comprehensive discussion and bibliography see Buss, *Biblical Form Criticism*.

Gunkel not only pioneered form criticism of the Hebrew Bible but also taught and influenced three prominent figures in the development of New Testament form criticism, Martin Dibelius (1883–1947), Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) and Karl Ludwig Schmidt (1891–1956). Gunkel's method and conclusions emerged in his commentaries on Genesis and the Psalms, his writings on Israelite literary history and a monograph on the folktale.[11] His work stresses a number of points. First, the history of a people and its literature is a developmental process. Not only do individuals mature over a single lifetime, so do groups and their cultural products, sometimes over many lifetimes. Ancient people were more like naive, modern children or peasants than modern educated adults. Vivid and lively early folk literature reflects this. Second, lying behind many biblical texts is a long history of oral tradition. Third, comparison of different types of literature within the Bible and without is fruitful – including sources from the ancient Mediterranean and the German legends and tales the Brothers Grimm collected and adapted. Fourth, genre is a key to meaning. Uncovering the nature and history of genres can help us to write the history of Israel and its literature. It can also put us in touch with the religious ideas and experience that these texts convey. Fifth, an aesthetic sensibility leads to a deeper appreciation of both history and religion. In his work one can see the influence of Herder and the diffusionist German folklore scholarship of the period. He has an acute eye for style. His Genesis commentary notes some of the same features that late twentieth-century literary critics discuss.

When we turn to Gunkel's New Testament pupils, we find that they retained many of these points with less of a focus on style.[12] They saw the Gospels as 'unliterary'. Dibelius, for example, notes that the development of the tradition proceeds 'independently, subject all the time to certain definite rules, for no creative mind has worked upon the material and impressed it with his own personality'.[13] Both Dibelius and Bultmann saw the style of the Gospels as popular and law governed. Bultmann, like Gunkel before him, used folklorist Axel Olrik's epic laws of folk narrative. He also thought that the same 'laws' he found in Matthew and Luke's adaptation of Mark and Q applied to prior oral stages. He agreed with Dibelius 'that form-criticism is not simply an exercise

[11] Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis; Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, comp. Joachim Begrich, trans. J. D. Nogalski (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998); Hermann Gunkel, *Water for a Thirsty Land: Israelite Literature and Religion*, ed. K. C. Hanson, trans. A. K. Dallas and James Schaaf, FCSB (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001); Hermann Gunkel, *The Folktale in the Old Testament*, trans. M. D. Rutter (Sheffield: Almond, 1987).

[12] Buss, *Biblical Form Criticism*, pp. 289–91.

[13] Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, p. 1.

in aesthetics nor yet simply a process of description and classification. . . . It is much rather "to rediscover the origin and the history of the particular units and thereby to throw some light on the history of the tradition before it took literary form".'[14] Gunkel's third pupil, Schmidt, focused on the framework in which the small units of tradition were placed. Mark, he held, creates the earliest Gospel outline, but 'basically does no more than arrange individual pericopes alongside each other'.[15] Schmidt also argued that the Gospels were popular folk-books similar to the legends of St Francis and Faust rather than high literary biographies.

The initial flowering of both source and form criticism was part of German academic culture. In common with nineteenth-century scholars such as the Grimms and Karl Lachmann, the Romantic desire for the authenticity and spirit of the past combined with scholarly tools to recover the original. Regina Bendix argues in relation to folklore scholarship that the 'bourgeois mentality' was torn between 'contrasting paths which locate authenticity in individual genius or in the folk as an anonymous community in an idealized past'.[16] She writes, 'Interwoven with this is the lingering question of spirituality and religion. Even though emotional vigor was displaced on the scientific surface, the search for proof of authenticity and origins could not lessen the civilizatory pain over the loss of God's ultimate authority. . . . The search for authenticity is ultimately a search for a spiritual essence.'[17]

After the Second World War young German scholars would not find visions of the *Volk* nearly as compelling, as we will see. In the 1970s and beyond, Erhardt Güttgemanns, Werner Kelber and others challenged the form critics' search for originals and understanding of orality.[18] James Muilenburg in his 1968 Society of Biblical Literature presidential address urged critics to go beyond form criticism to a new rhetorical criticism. Muilenburg held that 'consummate skill and artistry' often mark biblical writing.[19] Structural and other literary patterns lead to unified literary wholes. His new approach would help

[14] Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, pp. 3–4, citing Dibelius.

[15] K. L. Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu* (Berlin: Trowitzsch & Sohn, 1919), p. 317; English translation by John Riches, quoted in his introduction to K. L. Schmidt, *The Place of the Gospels in the General History of Literature*, trans. Byron R. McCane (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), p. xii.

[16] Regina Bendix, 'Diverging Paths in the Scientific Search for Authenticity', *Journal of Folklore Research* 29:2 (1992), pp. 103–32 at p. 105.

[17] Bendix,'Diverging Paths', p. 106.

[18] Erhardt Güttgemanns, *Candid Questions Concerning Gospel Form Criticism*, trans. William G. Doty (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1979); Werner Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

[19] James Muilenburg, 'Form Criticism and Beyond', *JBL* 88 (1969), pp. 1–18 at p. 18.

the interpreter 'to think the thoughts of the biblical writer after him'.[20] In time Muilenburg's call was heeded. Before we come to that, however, we turn to redaction criticism.

Redaction criticism

Redaction criticism focuses on the editing. In Hebrew Bible studies this often falls under the rubric of tradition history, which traces the transmission of traditions lying behind a text in oral or written stages to the final text. Gerhard von Rad's 1938 essay 'The Form Critical Problem of the Hexateuch' is a prime example.[21] Von Rad pictures the Yahwist as a creative theologian whose conception shaped the final form of the Hexateuch. Modern readers must come to grips with the complexity of the Hexateuch and each of its stages to grasp the fullness of its theological witness.

After the Second World War German scholars such as Günther Bornkamm (1905–90), Hans Conzelmann (1915–89) and Willi Marxsen (1919–93) pioneered redaction criticism on the Gospels of Matthew, Luke and Mark respectively. Marxsen coined the term *Redaktionsgeschicte* in a review of Conzelmann's *Die Mitte der Zeit*, a review in which he outlined a 'shift in emphasis of synoptic research'.[22] Redaction critics saw the evangelists as purposive authors rather than mere collectors or pens in the hands of an anonymous community. These authors were literary personalities (*Schriftstellerpersönlichkeiten*) whose theologies shaped unified Gospels.[23] But how could one locate the theology of an evangelist? Redaction critics turned to the string that the form critics had neglected in favour of the pearls of tradition they sought to recover. The selection, arrangement and framing, and editing of earlier tradition were telling. Some scholars had been disappointed to learn from W. Wrede (1859–1906) and K. L. Schmidt that the Marcan framework was not a reliable historical template for the life of Jesus any more than the frameworks of the other Gospels. Redaction critics, however, leapt happily on the Gospel frameworks and editing of sources to reconstruct each evangelist's theology. Bornkamm, for example, in 'The Stilling of the Storm' identified Matthew as an exegete or interpreter of tradition. 'Matthew', he wrote, 'is not only a hander-on of the narrative, but also its oldest exegete, and in fact the first to interpret the journey of the

[20] Muilenburg, 'Form Criticism and Beyond', p. 7.
[21] Von Rad, *From Genesis to Chronicles*, pp. 1–58.
[22] Willi Marxsen, review of Hans Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit* in *Monatschrift für Pastoraltheologie* 43 (1954), pp. 254–5.
[23] Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*, pp. 17–18.

disciples with Jesus in the storm and the stilling of the storm with reference to discipleship, and that means with reference to the little ship of the Church.'[24] Many redaction critics followed the two-source hypothesis, examining how Matthew and Luke edited pericopes from Mark and Q. Others explored how Mark edited what appeared to be pre-Marcan tradition and apparently created the Gospel form. Eventually, redaction critics discerned layers of tradition and editing in John and even in the hypothetical Q. Redaction critics were not only interested in the author's theology, however. They viewed the Gospels as addressing the needs of particular communities. Redaction critics were concerned with *Sitz im Leben* writ large, the setting of a Gospel as a whole. On one level an evangelist told a story of Jesus set in early first-century Palestine. On another he spoke through that story to address the needs of a particular later Christian community and sometimes Christian communities in each age. In the hands of redaction critics the Gospels became allegories.

Literary criticism: narrative, reader response and beyond

Tradition and redaction critics began to treat texts more as wholes with purposive authors. For a literary turn of the sort extra-biblical literary critics might recognise, however, what was necessary in the 1970s to early 1990s was 'for redaction criticism to mutate into a genuine literary criticism', as Norman Perrin put it.[25] It mutated, however, not into a single type of literary criticism, but into multiple hybrids reflecting the variety that existed in extra-biblical literary criticism: formalist, structuralist, post-structuralist, feminist, post-colonial and more. In the early period, however, literary criticism of biblical narratives operated in the realm of classical narratology.[26] In North America and Great Britain where the new approach was centred, this included

[24] Günther Bornkamm, 'The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew', in Günther Bornkamm et al., *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, trans. Percy Scott (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), pp. 52–7 at p. 55.

[25] Norman Perrin, 'The Interpretation of the Gospel of Mark', in *Parable and Gospel*, ed. K. C. Hanson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003 [1976]), pp. 64–72 at p. 69. Perrin credits Dan Via for the vivid expression.

[26] See David Herman (ed.), 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 3–21 at p. 12. For details and bibliography see David Jobling, 'Methods of Modern Literary Criticism', in Leo G. Perdue (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 19–35; David M. Gunn, 'Narrative Criticism', in McKenzie and Hayes (eds.), *To Each its Own Meaning*, pp. 201–29; Mehrenlahti, *Poetics for the Gospels?*; Moore, *Literary Criticism*; and Fernando F. Segovia, 'And They Began to Speak in Other Tongues', in Segovia and Tolbert (eds.), *Reading from this Place*, pp. 1–34.

an eclectic mix of Anglo-American narrative theory, Russian formalism and structuralist narratology, with some reader-response criticism thrown in for good measure.[27] In the USA the study of basic narrative categories such as plot, characterisation, setting and point of view in school and college curricula and a tradition of Bible as Literature courses facilitated moves towards literary analyses. A further impetus was the work of professional literary critics such as Robert Alter, Mieke Bal, Esther Fuchs, Menakhem Perry and Meir Sternberg on the Hebrew Bible and Frank Kermode and Northrop Frye on the Christian Bible. Notable was the active participation of Jewish scholars, including Israelis and increasing numbers of women. Much structuralist narratology treated texts as examples for the construction of an overall narrative poetics. Biblical critics, however, concerned themselves more with what poetics could offer interpretation. Both structuralism and formalism emphasised the interrelationships of a text's elements. Form and content were closely allied. Both the story (the what) and the discourse (how the story was told) were key. Texts were media of communication between a sender (author) and a receiver (readers/hearers) and reflected the context(s) in which communication occurred. Biblical critics emphasised the text and the author and reader implied in the text at first, bracketing history. They emphasised the way the parts of a narrative such as plot and character formed a unified whole. Some have read these emphases as marks of the influence of formalist American New Criticism. Perhaps more importantly they represented a reaction against previous criticism, which saw the final texts as incoherent and reconstructed the world behind them. As time passed, biblical literary critics would turn more to real readers and context.

A very popular example of the new approaches was Robert Alter's 1981 *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, which seeks to show how Hebrew Bible poetics work. It also takes aim at historical criticism as 'excavative' and at biblical scholars' forays into structuralism. Where a historical critic reads the story of Tamar and Judah in Genesis 38 as an interpolation, Alter reads it as intricately linked to its frame. Where source critics divide Genesis 1–3 into P and J creation stories, Alter argues that the author purposively juxtaposes the stories to present tensions between woman as equal and subordinate, God as transcendent and immanent, and the world as ordered and a 'shifting tangle'.[28] In essence Alter takes on the sorts of cues source and form critics use and reads them

[27] See the chapters by David Herman, Monika Fludnik and Brian McHale in Phelan and Rabinowitz (eds.), *Companion to Narrative Theory* for discussion and bibliography.

[28] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 141–7.

as often but not always in service of a literary whole. The text may appear primitive or incoherent when readers are not attuned to the literary conventions it employs.

Phyllis Trible, a Muilenburg student, also had a great impact. She practises rhetorical criticism from a feminist perspective. In 1978's *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* she concentrates on the text as an 'organic unity' in which the aesthetic and religious 'fuse'.[29] One of her most powerful chapters focuses on Genesis 2–3. She argues that the text itself counters misogynous readings of male superiority. She proceeds by a very close reading of the text. Her attention to structure and detail and her own literary skill make a persuasive argument. In 1984's *Texts of Terror* Trible turns to stories with female victims: Hagar, Tamar, the unnamed woman of Judges 19 and Jephthah's daughter. There she presents storytelling as 'a Trinitarian act that unites writer, text, and reader in a collage of understanding'.[30] She acknowledges a variety of literary approaches but continues to accent rhetorical criticism as well as 'overall design and plot structure'.[31] She also engages in an intertextual reading of the stories with passages in the Christian Bible and treats responses to the story within the Bible and from subsequent readers. Her turn to the reader is a natural consequence of a feminist perspective that sees the interested character of both androcentric and feminist reading. Her feminist perspective is shared by others who combined it with various literary and social–scientific approaches as literary criticism developed. This includes, for example, the postmodern work of Mieke Bal and the post-colonial criticism of Musa Dube.[32]

In New Testament studies, the literary turn gave birth to narrative criticism, a version of classical narratology shaped by application to the Gospels and its emergence from redaction criticism. Key exemplars are David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey and Donald Michie's *Mark as Story*, R. Alan Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, Jack Dean Kingsbury's *Matthew as Story* and Robert C. Tannehill's two-volume *The Narrative Unity of Luke–Acts*. Reader-response approaches went in tandem with narrative criticism but became more distinct with time. Robert M. Fowler's *Let the Reader Understand* and Jeffrey L. Staley's *The Print's First Kiss* are good examples. Stephen D. Moore chronicled both approaches in his 1989 *Literary Criticism and the Gospels*. Moore was critical of narrative criticism's focus on the Gospels as unified narratives, part of what

[29] Trible, *God and the Rhetoric*, pp. 8–9.
[30] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, p. 1.
[31] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, p. 4.
[32] For example, Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*.

he saw as a failure to follow extra-biblical literary criticism in post-structuralist and political directions. He saw the turn to the reader as heading in that direction. Moving from the nineties into the first decade of the twenty-first century Moore and others would take up his challenge moving in postmodern, post-colonial and other directions.

From this later perspective, the new literary approaches seem less at odds with the previous historical approaches than first appeared. Literary approaches now find their way into otherwise traditional commentaries. Stepping into the story world seems more like a necessary stop than a detour. The reader in the text sometimes serves as an index of what the original audience may have been like.[33] In the New Testament field literary approaches recently helped to spark discussion of whether the Gospels addressed specific communities and renewed discussion of their genre. This is not to say that nothing has changed. What is historicised now are readers as well as the final forms of the texts. Reception history shows the contextual nature of every reading.[34] The literary turn made a space for real readers to come to centre stage. Scholarly and lay interpreters now include minorities in Europe and North America and hail from every continent.

[33] See Thatcher and Moore (eds.), *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism*, especially Moore's 'Afterword'.

[34] For example, Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary*, 3 vols., Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989–2005).

7

Social-scientific readings of the Bible

HALVOR MOXNES

How did the Vietnam War change biblical studies? If we understand the Vietnam War not as merely a single event but as summing up many of the changes that shaped the last part of the twentieth century, its relevance for biblical studies becomes apparent. Some biblical scholars in the San Francisco area participated in the protests against the Vietnam War. They realised that to understand the historical, economic, political and social background of the war they needed adequate analytical tools, and found them in the social sciences. This experience led to the insight that these sciences were also useful to understand conflicts in the ancient societies they studied in biblical texts. The works of this group were among the seminal studies for social-scientific readings of the Bible.[1]

Their main question was: if the biblical texts received their meaning from a historical context, how could that context be understood and described? Traditionally, history, philology and philosophy had been the intellectual interlocutors for biblical studies; in the new situation some biblical scholars looked to the social sciences both for questions and for the theoretical perspectives to analyse societies.

This was not a totally new development. The Old Testament in particular was a veritable storehouse of ethnographic material for scholars who as early as the nineteenth century had interacted with sociology and social anthropology.[2] Max Weber used the study of Israelite prophetism to develop his theories of charismatic leadership that were later brought back and re-applied to biblical studies. At the turn of the twentieth century sociology influenced descriptions of early Christianity, undertaken both from a Marxist perspective and within the so-called Chicago school in biblical studies. At the same time biblical scholars in Europe used folklore studies of oral cultures in their form-

[1] E.g. Gottwald, *Tribes of Yahweh* and Elliott, *Home for the Homeless.*
[2] Carter and Meyers, *Community, Identity and Ideology*, pp. 3–35.

critical studies. However, due to the influence of the dialectical theology of Barth and Bultmann, which emphasised the contrast between culture and theology, there was a long period of discontinuity in the interaction between New Testament studies and the social sciences.[3]

New beginnings of social-science readings

In the 1970s and 1980s the changes mentioned above led to renewed interaction between biblical texts and studies of social structures. Pioneers of this approach in Hebrew Bible studies were George Mendenhall and Norman Gottwald. Gottwald used sociological and social-anthropological theory to argue that ancient Israel was not established by external immigration, but by social conflicts within Canaanite society.[4] Since then a central area of social-science studies has been the emergence of Israel within Palestine and the development of early Israelite society and finally the formation of a state. Other major areas have been that of institutions in ancient Israel such as the Temple and prophetism, and gender and sexuality. In *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* Carol L. Meyers combined feminist and social-scientific studies to get behind the patriarchal texts to recover the social situation of women.

Within New Testament studies several European and North American scholars presented innovative and sometimes controversial new approaches. John Gager analysed early Christianity as a millenarian movement in *Kingdom and Community*. Gerd Theissen observed the contrast in Gospel texts between an ethos of 'homelessness and poverty' and one of 'giving' (that presupposed property), and used sociology to establish a possible setting of the sayings in different social groups: 'wandering charismatics' and sedentary sympathisers.[5] In *Home for the Homeless* John H. Elliott used sociological studies of sectarian groups to investigate the relations between the ethos of 1 Peter and the precarious social situation of its addressees. In *The First Urban Christians* Wayne Meeks applied the sociological perspective of structural functionalism to read Pauline letters with the question 'What was it to be an ordinary Christian in the Pauline communities?', and focused on social stratification, forms of governance, patterns of behaviour and belief. Bruce Malina entered into the field of anthropology with his *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural*

[3] Theissen, *Social Reality*, pp. 1–29.
[4] Gottwald, *Tribes of Yahweh*.
[5] Theissen, *Sociology*.

Anthropology. Instead of material on Jewish faith and politics, common in New Testament introductions, this book presented social institutions, values and mentalities of Mediterranean societies as the context for the New Testament.

These studies had great influence in the following decades and served to establish a field of study with organised groups and collaborations, with the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature as the central meeting place.[6] The various groups reflect a division between two main approaches: one with a broad but eclectic use of social-science perspectives for the purpose of interpretation; and another with a strong focus on a consistent use of methods and models. It is the last approach that has the strongest organisational structure in the Context Group, with many joint publications and with a large international network of participants.[7] If this was initially a male-dominated field, there is now a growing number of women and feminist scholars active in social-science studies.

Unlike the other significant trend in biblical studies in recent years, the literary approach, most social-scientific readings are part of historical criticism. The use of social-science theories and models in biblical studies runs parallel to a similar development in historical studies, especially in social and cultural history as in the Annales school in France, with names such as Marc Bloch and Fernand Braudel.

Initially social-science readings primarily employed theories and models from sociology and social anthropology. Increasingly other fields of study have been drawn into the process, especially social psychology, studies of memory transmission and, most recently, social cognition. Social-science readings have become a widespread approach in biblical studies and cannot be limited to one group or one approach; however, the following presentation will focus on main issues in the theoretical interaction with social sciences.

Constructing a social world

With the multifaceted changes in the post-colonial, post-Vietnam period the stability and old order of the world could no longer be taken for granted. *The Social Construction of Reality*[8] by Berger and Luckmann was one of the most influential books in the attempts to orient oneself in this new world. The main message of the book was that knowledge of the world is not given; it

[6] See listing of programme units at www.sbl-site.org/meetings/AnnualMeeting.aspx.
[7] See www.contextgroup.org/.
[8] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967).

is constructed in a dialectic between society and humans. This perspective from the sociology of knowledge has become part of the intellectual climate and is reflected in the concept 'social world' that has become a standard term in many social-science studies of the Bible.[9] This term moves away from an understanding of the social environment as merely a background to see it as a geographical, social and ideological context with which the text interacts. 'Social world' can be used of the social context of the author and addressees, but also of the imagined world within the texts themselves. In all instances it raises the question of how this world is constructed, and it shows the great variety of uses of social sciences.

Encountering a foreign world

The post-colonial world brought the diversity of the world in terms of ethnicity, cultures and gender into focus in a new way. This questioned the integration of biblical studies in a Western hegemonic context and challenged the ethnocentric bias of interpretations located in privileged positions. Some of these challenges came from Bible readers and interpreters in Africa, Asia and Latin America, pointing out the similarities between their own societies and the historical ones of ancient Israel and early Christianity. As a result many Western Bible scholars saw the need to broaden the perspective of historical criticism; the biblical texts were not only distant in time, they were also distant in terms of *social structures* and *culture*. This focus on foreignness made social anthropology more relevant than sociology based on studies of modern societies. Studies by Mary Douglas, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Clifford Geertz were among the main resources. Their writings presented theoretical perspectives and models that proved useful in studies of ancient Israel and Palestine at the time of Jesus. While Mary Douglas introduced specific models (purity and boundaries; 'grid and group') for analysis,[10] Geertz inspired many biblical scholars with his understanding of religion as a cultural system and of cultural anthropology as a form of interpretation, not a hard science.[11]

Cultural anthropology was the starting point for Bruce Malina's influential book, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*. With

[9] E.g. Neyrey, *Social World of Luke–Acts*; Neufeld and DeMaris (eds.), *Understanding the Social World*.

[10] M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966); M. Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

[11] C. Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic, 1973).

the anthropology of Mediterranean societies as his basis, Malina found their characteristic elements in the social institutions of kinship and marriage, in values such as honour and shame, in perceptions of limited good, the dyadic (group-oriented) personality, and in purity boundaries. These patterns suggested that Mediterranean societies were characterised by a collectivism foreign to the individualism of modern Western societies, in particular of the United States.

The choice of Mediterranean anthropology to analyse the cultural context of the New Testament built on the presupposition that there was a great deal of continuity between traditional societies in the modern period studied by anthropologists and Mediterranean culture in antiquity. It was a presupposition shared by many classical historians who found Mediterranean anthropology useful as a heuristic tool in studies of ancient Greek and Hellenistic literature and history. This understanding of the Mediterranean as a distinct cultural and social entity was based on studies initiated by a group of Anglo-American anthropologists in the 1960s.[12] Their theories generated much interest, but also criticisms that questioned both that the Mediterranean was a distinct entity and that the central concepts such as honour and shame were special for this area. This criticism was also reflected within biblical studies. Mediterranean anthropology as a general model was prevalent in many social-science studies in the 1980s and 1990s, but later the trend has been towards greater diversity in issues and specificity in historical investigations. This corresponds to recent anthropological works, also by scholars from the region, which suggest that the category 'Mediterranean' may still be useful for comparative purposes, but it should focus not only on similarities but also on diversities within the region.[13]

Even if the Mediterranean as a broad category may be questioned, studies of many specific areas have contributed greatly to a better knowledge of the context of early Christian texts, for instance of household and families; childhood and slavery; gender roles; socio-political structures, economy and social relations such as patronage.[14] In Old Testament studies, however, anthropology of the Middle East and Africa have been more important than of the

[12] See J.-A. Pitt-Rivers (ed.), *Mediterranean Countrymen: Essays in the Social Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (The Hague: Mouton, 1963); J. Peristiany (ed.), *Honour and Shame: The Values of the Mediterranean* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1965).

[13] D. Albera, A. Blok and C. Bromberger, *L'anthropologie de la Méditerannée/Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001).

[14] Z. A. Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty, and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean*, BZNTW 130 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004).

Mediterranean region, for instance with regard to social structures, forms of leadership, types of medicine and purity rules.

Modelling a world

Few issues in social-science readings of the Bible have caused more controversy than the question of models. The idea behind the use of models from social sciences is that they will help to solve the difficulty we encounter when we try to make sense of the foreignness of the Bible in terms of culture, values, social structures, etc. We need some way to structure the material by means of known categories in order to relate what is foreign to our own world. Using a different terminology, this seems to be what the philosopher Charles Taylor is concerned with when he speaks of 'social imaginaries' as 'the way people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others … and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations'.[15] These social imaginaries represent that which is regarded as self-evident and taken for granted in a culture. In the terminology of social anthropology this information represents an *emic* perspective, from the point of view of the insiders. To make it understandable to outsiders, it must be translated into an *etic* form, using categories known to modern interpreters. Malina speaks of a model as an 'abstract, simplified representation of some real world object, event or interaction, constructed for the purpose of understanding, control or prediction'.[16]

Many social-science readings of biblical texts have used models in the interpretation of texts – for instance of honour and shame, limited good, patronage – so that the social-scientific readings by the Context Group can be summed up as *modelling early Christianity*.[17] It is at this point that the contrast between the two 'schools' of social-science readings (see above) becomes most visible. Behind the conflicts over specific issues there seems to be a deeply felt contrast between those who see a conscious use of models as necessary for interpretation and those who are inspired by Geertz to undertake interpretation as a 'thick' description of culture and who find models too 'scientific' and positivistic.[18]

[15] C. Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 23.
[16] Malina, *New Testament World*, p. 14.
[17] Esler (ed.), *Modelling Early Christianity.*
[18] E.g. S. Garrett, 'Sociology of Early Christianity', in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. VI (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 89–99; Esler (ed.), *Ancient Israel*, pp. 3–14.

Most of the criticism that has been directed against studies by members of the Context Group has argued that the models become too rigid, that they function as 'social laws' and that they predetermine the interpretation of texts. One response to this criticism is that the purpose of models is to be heuristic tools, not rigid social laws, to inspire 'the social-scientific imagination to ask new questions of data, to which only the data can provide answers'.[19] It has also been suggested that one should not think of models as generally applicable, but as constructions that must be tested and reformulated in light of specific cultural contexts.

Presuppositions and issues

Models are part of larger contexts of theories and presuppositions within social sciences that are always under discussion and subject to revisions. Therefore it is also necessary that biblical scholars who use social sciences discuss how useful or appropriate these presuppositions and theoretical agendas are for solving issues in biblical studies.

One important issue is how to deal with differences, inequalities and power in a society. Some sociologists have emphasised social integration and unity, what held a society together (e.g. Durkheim), while others have focused on differences and conflicts (e.g. Weber). When Theissen in his early studies of the Jesus movement saw it in light of an integration perspective on society,[20] the movement appeared to be a failure, since it was not able to overcome causes of conflict and tension in Palestinian society. Similarly the disagreements among scholars of how to understand Galilean society in the first century appear to be a result of differences between an integration and a conflict perspective. A central issue is whether relations between towns and peasant villages should be understood as in terms of domination and exploitation or within a pattern of unity and cooperation.[21]

Another much-discussed issue concerns the relations between collectivism and individualism. All sociologists agree that there is no 'pure' individualism, but there are different emphases in the interaction between society and individual. Thus, for example, Thomas Luckmann emphasises the role of social structures, whereas Anthony Giddens focuses on the role of the individual in

[19] Esler (ed.), *Ancient Israel*, p. 3.
[20] Theissen, *Sociology*.
[21] For different positions see R. A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1995) and J. L. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2000).

shaping its identity. This discussion is relevant for how one understands the relation between social structures and the individual in the biblical world. It has for instance been argued that expressions of an individualistic culture in Matthew's Gospel disqualified the model of a collectivistic culture for early Christianity.[22] In response, one could say that even if specific observations are valid – for example, that Jesus encouraged individuals to break away from their households – that does not invalidate the general observation that the household was the primary source of identity.[23]

The question of how to understand individuals is relevant for the discussion of the historical Jesus. The use of Weber's concept of the charismatic leader for Jesus which made him a model for the unique individual in the twentieth century has been criticised for being too modern and individualistic.[24] Instead of the Weberian sociological approach, anthropological approaches have placed Jesus in a cultural context; for example, in everyday life of Galilee,[25] or with a view to how Jesus might have been understood in the early communities, using the cross-cultural model of a shaman.[26] Furthermore, some studies especially by feminist critics move altogether away from an individualistic to a more collective model, seeing Jesus as part of a network or of a liberating Jewish movement.

The role and function of religion in the ancient world is another topic under discussion. Social-science readings question that the modern presupposition of a 'privatised religion' can be applied to ancient societies. In pre-modern societies religion was not separated out as a distinct sector, but embedded in society, and especially integrated in kinship and politics. This view is well presented in a book by K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus*, with a subtitle, *Social Structures and Social Conflicts*, that signals its place within a tradition of structural-functionalist approaches and conflict theory.

[22] L. J. Lawrence, *An Ethnography of the Gospel of Matthew: A Critical Assessment of the Use of the Honour and Shame Model in New Testament Studies*, WUNT 165 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

[23] Z. A. Crook, 'Structure Versus Agency in Studies of the Biblical Social World: Engaging with Louise Lawrence', *JSNT* 29 (2007), pp. 251–75.

[24] Bruce J. Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 123–42.

[25] Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce, *L'uomo Gesù: Giorni, luoghi, incontri di una vita* (Milan: Mondadori, 2008).

[26] P. Craffert, *The Life of a Galilean Shaman: Jesus of Nazareth in Anthropological-Historical Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008).

Feminist readings

One of the strongest criticisms of social-science approaches as they have been practised by male scholars has come from feminist perspectives, voiced especially by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.[27] She argues that they use a rigid model of patriarchy in arguing that women could not have had an active and equal role in the Jesus movement. She also finds that social-science criticism is used to describe the dichotomy of honour and shame, male and female as an objective 'fact'. This criticism points to the need to distinguish between the texts on the one hand, which make male views into social laws, and social practice on the other, where women may participate in public life and compete for honour. In *A Woman's Place* Carolyn Osiek and Margaret MacDonald point to the important role of women anthropologists in the study of honour and shame, since they have access to the women's world that is closed to men. Osiek and MacDonald also bring in hitherto neglected aspects of life in household and ancient house churches, such as childbirth and the nursing of children, and the position of female slaves. In a similar way Elisa Estévez Lopez brings to attention the neglected area of women's health in the Mediterranean in antiquity as the context for the story of the women healed in Mark 5.[28] Consequently, although social-science studies was initially a male-dominated field, a growing number of women and feminist scholars are now active. The discussion of honour and shame reveals how women and/or feminist scholars both represent different theoretical perspectives and bring to light new thematic areas.

From social-science readings to a hermeneutics of dialogue

There can be no doubt that in terms of creating a broader understanding of the social formation of the Jesus movement and early Christianity in a first-century, non-Western context, the social-science approach has produced important results. But the title 'social-science readings' points to the most important test of this approach: does it produce readings that make a difference? At first the use of theories from social sciences was accused of being theologically reductionistic. As this approach has become more common and

[27] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation*, pp. 82–114.
[28] Elisa Estévez Lopez, *El poder de una mujer creyente*, Asociación Bíblica Española 40 (Estella: Verbo Divino, 2003).

has found its place more as an accepted supplement to historical criticism, these accusations have been silenced. Instead of reducing theology to social structures, we may say that insights from social sciences can be used to illuminate theological positions. Many studies show how social categories are integrated in the perceptions of the divine and relations between God and humans. It is the sign of how social-science readings have moved into centre stage of the interpretation of biblical texts that they have resulted in many thematic biblical studies,[29] commentaries to individual books[30] and also comprehensive theological studies.[31]

But what is the relevance of these readings for modern readers who engage with the biblical texts? The emphasis on the *foreignness* of the biblical texts and their contexts represents a contrast to the hermeneutics of Rudolf Bultmann, who saw the task of interpretation being to find the *similarities* in understanding of life between the New Testament and its modern readers. Philip Esler has discussed the question of the relation between social-science criticism and the Christian message (kerygma), and holds that this criticism integrates context and kerygma, so that social-science interpretation of the New Testament provides paradigms of Christian ways of living in the world.[32] In his *New Testament Theology* Esler has developed these views into a hermeneutics of dialogue where contemporary experiences can be brought into dialogue with biblical texts viewed not as absolute authorities but as expressions of dialogue in their own time.

In social-science readings there are moral issues at stake that need to be made explicit in terms of hermeneutical responsibility. Does the emphasis on Mediterranean values, like collectivism, imply a cultural protest against the excesses of modern individualism? And can the focus on the pyramidal power structures of Palestinian society present a criticism of modern empires and structures of oppression? Some interpreters emphasise the objectivity of social-scientific criticism. This position may hide the close relations between social-science readings and explicitly moral readings such as feminist, liberation and post-colonial readings that may have preserved more of the links to the anti-Vietnam protests.

[29] J. H. Neyrey, *Give God the Glory: Prayer and Worship in Cultural Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007).
[30] E.g. Bruce J. Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).
[31] Esler, *New Testament Theology.*
[32] Esler, 'Introduction', in *Modelling Early Christianity*, pp. 1–19.

A future for social-science criticism?

What will social-science readings look like in the future? It is of course impossible to predict the future, but it is possible to see some trends towards a larger diversity of areas and perspectives with which biblical studies interact. The central problem that the social sciences addressed, how to represent social reality and social thought, is a question that affects many disciplines. It may turn out that the term 'social sciences' is too narrow, so that we might rather speak of biblical studies interacting with human sciences in a broader sense. Some of these new areas of interaction are studies of memory, cognitive science, ethnicity and space theory.[33]

Cognitive sciences respond to the growing interest in *how* people think; in terms of memory as a cultural construct but also in terms of how the brain works biologically.[34] So far the identity of the early Christian groups has been discussed in terms of theories of groups (e.g. sects, millenarian groups, etc.); but now the issue of identity in terms of *ethnicity* is becoming increasingly important.[35] This raises the issue of the ethics of interpretation. Replacing the category of 'race', ethnicity enters into a history of 200 years of biblical interpretation where issues of identity have created great controversy over contemporary political issues such as apartheid, discrimination and persecution. There is also a growing awareness of how identities always 'take place', that is, how place, space and landscape play a role in shaping identities and social relations.[36]

These developments point to the need to take into consideration the complexities involved in questions of identities. They are not based on single issues and cannot be studied in isolation. The new theoretical approach of intersectionality, developed within feminist studies, points to the need to see gender, sex, ethnicity, class, age, etc. within a totality that makes up identities, social systems and hierarchies.[37]

[33] See Neufeld and DeMaris (eds.), *Understanding the Social World*.

[34] P. Luomanen, I. Pyysiänen and R. Uro, *Explaining Early Christianity and Judaism: Contributions from Cognitive and Social Science* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

[35] M. G. Brett (ed.), *Ethnicity in the Bible*, Biblical Interpretation Series 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1998); Denise K. Buell, *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

[36] H. Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in his Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003); E. C. Stewart, *Gathered around Jesus: An Alternative Spatial Practice in the Gospel of Mark* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009).

[37] L. Nashrallah and E. Schüssler Fiorenza (eds.), *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009).

Most likely the most interesting developments will be the unpredictable ones. We have not seen the full impact of feminist criticism on the way social-science theories have been used to support patriarchal presuppositions; and we can expect more innovative uses of social science from feminist positions. I also hope that we will see similar criticisms of Western-based interpretations from scholars located in non-Western positions, as well as innovative uses of different cultural and social systems to illuminate the social worlds of biblical scriptures.

8

Reception history of the Bible

IAN BOXALL

The history of the Bible's reception is almost as old as the biblical writings themselves. The Scriptures are replete with examples of later writers and editors reworking traditions they received, including texts which subsequently became canonical. The Chronicler's dramatic rewriting of the books of Samuel and Kings, to glorify the 'golden age' of Solomon's reign (2 Chron. 1–9) or explain the surprisingly long rule of the wicked King Manasseh (2 Chron. 33:10–20; cf. 2 Kings 21:1–18), is just one striking example. The book of Jeremiah is a rich repository of reception, combining poetic oracles likely to derive from the historical prophet, prose sermons influenced by the theology of Deuteronomy, and biographical narratives referring to Jeremiah in the third person. Its fluid textual tradition, attested by the very different versions surviving in the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint, further illustrates the capacity of the Jeremiah tradition to speak afresh to subsequent generations.

Similarly, on the standard solution to the Synoptic Problem, the Gospels of Matthew and Luke are innovative receptions of their predecessor Mark. Their retelling of Mark's story of Jesus – Matthew re-clothing Jesus with the mantle of Judaism, Luke portraying him as a Graeco-Roman hero – sets the scene for even more imaginative receptions in the centuries which follow (the rich development of Matthew's story of the Magi in subsequent tradition is a case in point).[1] Finally, without once quoting Old Testament passages, the book of Revelation is from beginning to end an imaginative reception of Israel's Scriptures, especially the prophetic tradition.

If reception is already at work within the pages of the Bible, the intervening centuries provide an inexhaustible reservoir of diverse interpretations,

[1] On this see Richard C. Trexler, *The Journey of the Magi* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); David Brown, *Tradition and Imagination* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 86–92.

receptions and outworkings of biblical texts. Although obvious examples are the classic commentators of Jewish and Christian tradition (e.g. Rashi, Origen, Jerome, Aquinas and Luther), receptions of the Bible are present almost everywhere. They can be found in the construction of Gothic cathedrals and in illuminated manuscripts such as the Book of Kells or the Lambeth Apocalypse, in political attempts to establish God's kingdom on earth, in the 'Battle Hymn of the Republic' and William Blake's *Jerusalem*, and in the sculptures of Jacob Epstein. Many of these receptions are the result of Jewish and Christian reception. Hence the German theologian Gerhard Ebeling (1912–2001) could speak of church history as 'the history of the interpretation of Holy Scripture'.[2] But such has been the cultural influence of the biblical writings that they continue to make an impact even outside the religious communities which regard them as canonical.

But reception history of the Bible, as it has come to be used in scholarly circles, is more than the reception of the Bible, which has been going on from the beginning. A relative newcomer to the table of biblical scholarship, reception history attempts to locate receptions of biblical texts within a broader interpretative, often historical, framework, as well as categorising similar interpretations across diverse cultures and time frames.[3] Its influence can now be felt in scholarly journals,[4] encyclopaedias[5] and research centres,[6] as well as the growing interest in issues of reception at academic conferences.

As a way of doing history, reception history is in fact more truly 'diachronic' (tracing the reception of the Bible 'through time') than historical criticism, despite the fact that diachronicity has often been claimed for the historical critic's interest in 'the world behind the text' (the author, the author's context and community). It presupposes, not only that the Bible has had a huge impact theologically, socially and culturally, but that studying how it has been received is both historically interesting and an integral dimension of what the biblical texts mean. Reception history therefore has a much broader remit than historical criticism, or even the 'history of interpretation' of the Bible, which has tended to focus on scholarly commentaries and classic interpreters.

[2] Ebeling, *The Word of God and Tradition*, p. 26.
[3] Jonathan Roberts, 'Introduction', in Lieb et al. (eds.), *Oxford Handbook*, p. 1.
[4] E.g. *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception* (www.relegere.org).
[5] E.g. Allison et al. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Bible*.
[6] E.g. the Oxford-based Centre for Reception History of the Bible: www.crhb.org.

The broad interests of reception history

The broader parameters of reception history can be seen in two commentary series which have pioneered a reception-historical approach. The editors of the Blackwell Bible Commentaries (BBC) state the focus of their series to be on 'the influence of the Bible on literature, art, music, and film, its role in the evolution of religious beliefs and practices, and its impact on social and political developments'.[7] Similarly broad are the interests of the Swiss New Testament scholar Ulrich Luz, whose commentary on Matthew in the ecumenical Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar (EKK) series was key in placing reception history – or rather his preferred term *Wirkungsgeschichte* or 'effective history' – firmly on the agenda of New Testament scholarship. Luz speaks of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of a biblical text as 'the history of a text in media other than the commentary, thus, e.g., in sermons, canonical law, hymnody, art, and in the actions and sufferings of the church'.[8]

Hence, the reception history of Matthew's Gospel might include Caravaggio's paintings of St Matthew in San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome, Bach's *St Matthew Passion* and Pier Paolo Pasolini's classic film *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1964). Especially noteworthy is the claim that human action is a key object of reception-historical study: for example, how Matthew's Sermon on the Mount impacted on Christian communities and individuals as diverse as St Francis and the early Friars Minor, the Mennonites and Leo Tolstoy; or, more negatively, how certain actions of political and church leaders were prompted by an anti-Semitic reading of Matthew 27:25 ('His blood be on us and on our children').

The particular shape of a reception history will, of course, vary according to a biblical book and its specific subject matter, as a survey of the individual commentaries in the BBC series reveals. The fact that the book of Esther lacks any explicit reference to God has not diminished its fascination for interpreters across the centuries. Thus the character of Esther has functioned variously as a type of the Virgin Mary (reflected in late medieval hymnody, sculpture at Chartres and stained glass in St Chapelle, Paris) or, more rarely, of Christ, as a rare example of a woman writer to inspire female successors, and as an exemplar of the complementarity of divine and human action.[9] Unsurprisingly, the visionary book of Revelation has spawned almost as many receptions as

[7] BBC Series Editors' Preface.
[8] Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 95. Here he is influenced by his teacher Gerhard Ebeling.
[9] Jo Carruthers, *Esther Through the Centuries*, BBC (Malden, MA, Oxford and Carlton, Victoria: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 12–27.

readers, with a particularly rich history of reception in visual art.[10] On the other hand, the reception history of Galatians has been predominantly literary, dominated by commentaries and similar texts.[11]

The remainder of this chapter will endeavour to flesh out some of the distinctive characteristics and interests of reception history. It will begin by exploring the relationship between reception history and *Wirkungsgeschichte*. This will be followed by an attempt to classify different trends or emphases amongst those who practise reception history. Although hard-and-fast distinctions are difficult to sustain given the fluidity of the discipline, it is possible to distinguish between reception historians who conduct their work within particular theological and ecclesial traditions, those who (consciously or unconsciously) treat the study of a book's reception as a means to a better understanding of its original meaning, and others who want to keep the parameters and potential for meanings as broad as possible.[12] Finally, a few reflections will be offered on the prospects for reception history within the discipline of biblical studies.

Reception history or *Wirkungsgeschichte*?

The term reception history (*Rezeptionsgeschichte*) is derived from literary theory, especially the German literary critic Hans Robert Jauss (1921–97).[13] Underlying Jauss's work is the influence of his teacher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), to whom we are indebted for Luz's preferred term *Wirkungsgeschichte*, which is often used interchangeably with reception history.[14] The German-speaking world tends to use the latter term (as reflected in the EKK), while Anglophones often prefer reception history.

[10] E.g. Frederick van der Meer, *Apocalypse: Visions from the Book of Revelation in Western Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978); Arthur W. Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse: Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993); Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, *Revelation*, BBC (Malden, MA, Oxford and Carlton, Victoria: Blackwell, 2004); Christopher Rowland, 'Imagining the Apocalypse', *NTS* 51 (2005), pp. 303–27; William John Lyons and Jorunn Økland (eds.), *The Way the World Ends? The Apocalypse of John in Culture and Ideology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009).

[11] John Riches, *Galatians Through the Centuries*, BBC (Malden, MA, Oxford and Carlton, Victoria: Blackwell, 2008).

[12] I am particularly indebted here to the discussion of reception history in James G. Crossley, *Reading the New Testament: Contemporary Approaches* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 117–63. Crossley describes his three sub-categories as 'theological', essentially a form of historical theology; 'corrective' interpretations; and 'anything goes'.

[13] E.g. Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic*. See also Riches, *Galatians*, pp. 5–10; Parris, *Reception Theory*.

[14] See especially Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 299–306.

But are reception history and *Wirkungsgeschichte* the same thing? Many scholars are more than happy to treat them as synonyms.[15] Both have a scholarly concern for the 'afterlives' of biblical texts, and include interpretations of the Bible in a variety of media besides the written text. Both regard studying ongoing interpretations as a key element in the interpretative process, not simply an optional extra for particular scholarly interest groups. So *Wirkungsgeschichte* and reception history overlap considerably in terms of content.

However, there is a significant difference between the two in terms of focus. Reception history focuses on the reader or interpreter: how they receive the text in their particular historical and cultural setting. *Wirkungsgeschichte*, meanwhile, emphasises the dynamic potency of the text itself, its capacity to produce an 'effect' or 'result' (*Wirkung*). It poses the following question: are there only recipients and receptions, or are there also effects and influences? Is there not a sense in which the text might be viewed as subject, with a life of its own, surprising and challenging the readers? To use Jauss's terminology, are not texts *weltbildend*, 'world-shaping', as well as reflections of the worldview and cultural assumptions of its readers (*weltabbildend*)?[16]

All this explains why the term *Wirkungsgeschichte* is so difficult to translate. The standard English translation of Gadamer's classic *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960) renders the phrase as 'history of effect', although this is sometimes pluralised as the 'history of effects' (acknowledging that the same texts can have multiple effects). Alternatively, the term is rendered 'history of influence' or 'history of impact'. All these variant translations emphasise the capacity of the biblical writings to provoke new meanings, affect human lives, and leave their footprint on the sands of history and human culture.

An alternative translation is 'effective history'.[17] This brings us closer to Gadamer's concern for how historically situated human beings understand. Gadamer is clear that he is not advocating a new method for historical study, but reflecting upon the act of interpretation itself. Far from standing outside the historical process so as to study a historical moment or text objectively, the interpreter is an integral part of that history of reception and influence with which he or she attempts to engage. In Gadamer's words: 'If we are trying to understand a historical phenomenon from the historical distance that is characteristic of our hermeneutical situation, we are always already affected

[15] 'Reception history, history of interpretation, call it what you will, is a subject whose time has come': Jonathan Roberts and Christopher Rowland, 'Introduction', *JSNT* 33/2 (2010), pp. 131–6 at p. 132.
[16] Riches, *Galatians*, p. xiii.
[17] Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, p. 165.

by history.'[18] Therefore attempts to say what the text once meant are already affected by pre-judgements and pre-understandings of what the text means. Where we have come from frames our view of the text and the historical situation which provoked it, as well as shaping the questions we think worthy of asking.

How one chooses to describe the reception-historical enterprise may also have a theological underpinning. Robert Morgan has suggested that a preference for *Rezeption* over *Wirkung* may reflect the more secular environment in which biblical studies often functions. Reception history can be undertaken without attending to the truth claims of the biblical texts, whereas those working within an overtly synagogal or ecclesial context, where the effects of the Bible are most strongly felt, may have a preference for its *Wirkung*.[19] However, it is possible to overemphasise the difference. As the BBC series reveals, historians with theological commitments are able to prioritise the diverse receptions of biblical books, and the interpreters who receive them, whilst retaining an interest in the theological implications and outworking of these texts (even if a wider interest enables them to embrace marginal as well as magisterial readings).

Rejoining older conversations

Theological openness to the key exegetical traditions of Judaism and Christianity, and their classic exegetes, represents one major strand within reception history. It chimes in with Gadamer's own critique of the 'hermeneutic of suspicion' employed by some contemporary biblical critics,[20] and Jauss's concept of a 'summit dialogue' (*Gipfeldialog*) between authors whose interpretations represent significant 'peaks' or 'summits' in a text's reception.[21] Such a theologically centred reception history is well served by several commentary series devoted to patristic exegesis, hitherto dismissed by biblical scholars as unbridled allegorising (e.g. InterVarsity Press's Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture and the related Ancient Christian Texts series; The

[18] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 300.

[19] Robert Morgan, '*Sachkritik* in Reception History', *JSNT* 33/2 (2010), pp. 175–90 at pp. 175–6.

[20] Though others would claim that Gadamer's critique challenges the hegemony of particular theological and ecclesial traditions as much as it does that of the (historically critically dominated) academy: e.g. Roberts and Rowland, 'Introduction', p. 133.

[21] On Jauss's *Gipfeldialog der Autoren* see Parris, *Reception Theory*, pp. 216–22. One obvious difficulty is that different churches and theological traditions may disagree over identifying the classic commentators and the particular 'summits'.

Church's Bible published by Eerdmans; Novum Testamentum Patristicum, currently in production by Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht). Similar growing interest may be detected in medieval exegetical traditions, both Jewish and Christian.[22]

This theologically committed form of reception history might be described as rejoining a long conversation,[23] or a series of long conversations, about the true subject matter of the Bible, and the appropriate methods for finding meaning in the text. For all the benefits brought by critical biblical scholarship, there have also been losses. In the case of the Old Testament, the (positive) return to the Hebrew text in the modern period has had the knock-on effect of cutting Christian interpreters loose from their own exegetical tradition, with its typological, Christological and liturgical readings of Old Testament texts.[24] Reception history thus has a crucial role in reminding religious communities where they have come from, for good or for ill, where they might have lost the map or the travel guide, and how others have got to where they are. This latter point is particularly important, for it prevents theologically committed reception historians from remaining rigidly within their denominational boxes. Indeed, understanding the exegetical traditions of other churches is a key presupposition of the ecumenical EKK series.[25] It is also presupposed in the recent volumes on Jesus of Nazareth by Pope Benedict XVI, which attempt an exegesis able to hold theology and history together rather than driving them apart.[26]

Two further positive aspects of theologically motivated reception history are worthy of mention. The first is a more sympathetic assessment of the multivalency of so-called pre-critical interpretations, with their rich combination of literal, allegorical and tropological (or 'moral') senses. Greater familiarity with Origen, Jerome, John Chrysostom, the authors of the *Glossa*

[22] E.g., to varying degrees, volumes in the BBC series. On Christian medieval exegesis specifically, see also de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*.

[23] The phrase comes from Johnson and Kurz, *Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship*. Other pleas for biblical scholars to take seriously older patterns of exegesis include Davis and Hays (eds.), *The Art of Reading Scripture*; Thompson, *Reading the Bible with the Dead*.

[24] This has been less of a problem for Jewish scholars, given the prominence still given to the Jewish exegetical tradition.

[25] Luz's EKK commentary, for example, gives preference to interpretations 'which had an impact on the Protestant and the Catholic churches as confessional traditions': Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 96.

[26] Benedict's second volume draws sympathetically on early Lutheran exegetes such as David Chytraeus, as well as patristic and medieval authorities such as Origen, Maximus the Confessor and Bernard of Clairvaux: Benedict XVI (Josef Ratzinger), *Jesus of Nazareth Part Two. Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* (London: CTS; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011).

ordinaria or Hugh of St Cher reveals that, far from being the result of fanciful imaginations, their readings of the Bible exhibit a very precise exegetical strategy with its own inner logic, and its conviction that the human author is but one factor in the quest for meaning. The second is particularly related to early patristic commentators. Luke Timothy Johnson notes the political, cultural and intellectual analogies between the pluralism of the contemporary world and the pluralist environment in which exegetes such as Origen and Augustine operated. This makes them particularly interesting dialogue partners for biblical exegetes today.[27]

Reception history in the service of original meanings

The presupposition of reception history that texts are multivalent, with potential to call forth new and forgotten meanings, has often brought it into conflict with the historical-critical paradigm which has dominated academic biblical studies until relatively recently. Claims of multivalency sit uneasily alongside the historical-critical belief that the foundational meaning of a text is its original meaning (what it meant for its human author, or at least for its first audiences). Subsequent interpretations might in theory have some legitimacy as 'applications' of the text, but only insofar as they can be judged positively against that original meaning. Moreover, there is a tendency among historical critics to assume that even the text's original meaning must be univocal.

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics represent a profound challenge to such an understanding of the exegetical enterprise. Gadamer invites critics of reception history to consider the extent to which their own work presupposes and is shaped by the ways in which the Bible has been received by their predecessors, down to the questions they consider worth asking and the range of meanings they consider possible. He queries historical criticism's quest for a single meaning, and its according a foundational status to authorial intention.

A second strand within reception-historical study of the Bible uses aspects of the Gadamerian critique to attempt a more creative dialogue with historical criticism. It is represented by scholars who engage in reception history at least in part to gain a clearer understanding of what the text originally *meant*. Whether even this takes seriously enough Gadamer's critique of

[27] Johnson and Kurz, *Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship*, pp. 35–118.

foundationalism is a moot point.[28] What it does emphasise is that attention to the broad history of a text's reception – rather than treating the historical distance between the text and the contemporary situation as a chasm to be jumped over – may enable historical critics to perform their own task more effectively. Engaging in reception history may help the historical critic to understand the original meaning better, through becoming aware of forgotten or unknown possibilities, and thereby learning to ask better questions.

This can be illustrated by considering how older (rabbinic, patristic and medieval) exegetes dealt with the literal sense of Scripture, including the question of what the human author intended to convey. In contrast to much historical criticism, they were open to the possibility that even the literal sense might not be univocal. Thomas Aquinas' discussion of faith (*fides*) in his commentary on Romans regards its dual aspect – God's faithfulness and human faith in God – as integral to the literal sense of Paul's letter. Thus his exegesis cuts across the often polarised debate in contemporary Pauline studies regarding the Greek phrase *pistis Christou* (is it an objective genitive, 'faith in Christ', or a subjective genitive, 'the faith(fulness) of Christ'?). Similarly, while Thomas certainly parallels recent Pauline scholars in recognising different interpretative options for 'the righteousness of God' (Greek *dikaiosunē theou*, Vulgate *iustitia Dei*), unlike his modern counterparts he refuses to adjudicate between them. Rather, he treats them as mutually related, 'distinct but not separate'.[29]

A second example comes from the reception history of the Apocalypse. The vast majority of modern commentators interpret Revelation 1:9 as referring to John's exile to Patmos as a result of imperial action. Yet although this explanation is attested very early (e.g. by Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Victorinus), it is not necessarily understood by patristic and medieval exegetes as mutually exclusive. Thus in various apocryphal lives of John (such as the Acts of John at Rome and the Acts of John by Prochorus) Roman action is clearly subordinated to the hand of God, the emperor being a mere pawn in a divinely orchestrated narrative. Ironically, this claim that God was ultimately

[28] For a trenchant critique of reception historians who in practice treat reception history as a secondary activity to 'scientific' exegesis, failing to see that the latter is itself a 'reception' of the text, see Roland Boer, 'Against "Reception History"', *The Bible and Interpretation* (May 2011): www.bibleinterp.com/opeds/boe358008.shtml (accessed 06/09/2012). Also Ibrahim Abraham, 'Review Essay: Biblicism, Reception History, and the Social Sciences', *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception* 1:2 (2011), pp. 359–67.

[29] Scott W. Hahn and John Kincaid, 'The Multiple Literal Sense in Thomas Aquinas' Commentary on Romans and Modern Pauline Hermeneutics', in Matthew Levering and Michael Dauphinais (eds.), *Reading Romans with St Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), pp. 163–82.

responsible for John's sojourn on the island of vision has a better claim to reflect the conscious intention of Revelation's human author than the historical-critical alternatives which bracket out theological questions.

Such examples flag up the limitations of a narrowly conceived historical paradigm, with its quest for a single 'original meaning'. Reception history raises the possibility that the original author may have intended to convey ambiguity, and expected readers to fill in the often substantial gaps in the text.

A final example of the 'corrective' possibilities of reception history is Markus Bockmuehl's reassessment of the scholarly consensus of the historical relationship between Peter and Paul, over which F. C. Baur's classic Hegelian conflict model of Christian origins continues to make its influence felt. The Byzantine iconographical tradition – which presents the two apostles in a complex relationship yet ultimately bound together in the embrace of Christian charity – invites a reconsideration of the more positive early reception history of these two figures, and ultimately a historical reconsideration of the New Testament sources themselves.[30]

Keeping the boundaries wide

The Blackwell Companion to the Bible and Culture, edited by John Sawyer, is indicative of the wide potential of a third strand in reception history, which argues for the boundaries to be as flexible and permeable as possible (James Crossley's 'anything goes').[31] Although it recognises that the Bible has had particular impact in those religious communities for which it has functioned as authoritative text, it also seeks engagement with biblical receptions outside those communities, including receptions critical of the Bible. Sawyer's volume is wide-ranging indeed. As well as coverage of the various historical phases of the Bible's reception and its impact in different cultural contexts, it considers receptions in areas as diverse as literature, music, architecture, the theatre, politics, ecology and psychology. Readers may be surprised to discover within its pages discussions of biblical reception in the Adam Forepaugh Circus in 1892 Philadelphia, or the Clint Eastwood films *High Plains Drifter* (1973) and *Pale Rider* (1985). Similar breadth may be found in the BBC series, where the

[30] Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word*, pp. 121–36. Bockmuehl's attention here to the *early* reception history of Peter and Paul is more sophisticated than a simple claim that the interpreters of the first few centuries are culturally and linguistically closer to the biblical authors than modern exegetes.

[31] Sawyer (ed.), *Blackwell Companion to the Bible*.

Revelation volume by Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland consciously includes marginal and even maverick interpretations of the Apocalypse.

This broad approach to reception history is particularly associated with university departments of religious or biblical studies in secular universities, less constrained by the need to engage with classic interpreters or interpretations of particular theological traditions. However, this distinction between 'broadly based' reception historians and theologically committed ones can be too rigidly applied. Ulrich Luz's contribution to Matthean scholarship in his EKK commentary may have been constrained by the parameters of the series (directed as it was towards a German-speaking Lutheran and Catholic readership) as well as publishing costs. Nonetheless, particularly in the later volumes, he can cast his net more widely. His comments on the effective history of Matthew 25:31–46 (the Sheep and the Goats), for example, include reference to the Korean poet Kim Chi Ha.

On the other side, it would be naive for reception historians of the broad type to consider themselves immune from the kinds of commitments which link the theologically motivated to specific interpretative traditions or classic commentators. Reception history inevitably demands decisions about selection, organisation and interpretation, and secular reception historians are equally affected by personal commitments, and pre-judgements as to what is significant and worthwhile.

That being said, a broadly based reception history has the capacity to encourage interdisciplinary work across the humanities and social sciences (including the history of art, history, English literature and cultural anthropology), not just with other theological or religious studies disciplines. It can include engagement with politics, an area largely untouched by classical biblical studies, where receptions of the Bible have a real (and sometimes detrimental) effect on the way the world is.[32]

Looking forward

What of the future prospects for reception history? Critics may dismiss it as yet another fad in biblical studies, which contains too many unresolved questions. What are the parameters of reception history? How is the material discovered to be selected, categorised and organised, and how are the resulting interpretative narratives to be assessed? How can it avoid the danger of becoming an exercise in listing, collation, or cataloguing? Most

[32] Crossley, *Reading the New Testament*, pp. 122–8, 136–9.

fundamentally, should reception history be understood as another 'criticism' alongside form, redaction, narrative or post-colonial criticism? Or, in the light of Gadamer, does it represent a different way of understanding all these biblical sub-disciplines?

One proposal which has considerable merit is that reception history might function as an 'umbrella' for different sub-disciplines of biblical studies, thus facilitating a conversation between them.[33] Historical critics might re-imagine their various methodologies as different forms of reception history, whilst others might come to appreciate the historical dimension to the world 'in front of the text'. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the possibilities. Textual criticism, traditionally undertaken to reconstruct the 'original text', can also function to explore that text's rich reception in scribal corrections, errors, harmonisations and interpretative glosses, and in the physical format of biblical manuscripts.[34] Redaction criticism of the Gospels has long had the potential to be a tool of reception, with its interests in how a redactor handles sources so as to provoke new meanings. More widely, recent scholarly interest in how the earliest audiences received biblical texts has blurred the distinction between historical study of the Bible in its original setting and reader- and audience-centred interpretations.

Finally, leaving aside the philosophical and terminological discussions, reception history has a fundamentally democratic character which could help overcome the gulf between academic biblical studies on the one hand, and ordinary religious readers, or a general public interested for different reasons in biblical reception, on the other. A visit to a Gothic cathedral can be an exercise in reception history. Examining an illuminated manuscript in a museum, or standing before a Renaissance painting of the Annunciation in an art gallery, can engage the viewer in reception history. The same might be said of discussing a film inspired by a biblical narrative, or even reflecting upon popular reading of the Bible in a church study group. The need for methodological reflection is still present; but the enterprise itself is potentially open to many.

[33] This proposal is made, in different ways, by Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word*, pp. 64–8; William John Lyons, 'Hope for a Troubled Discipline: Contributions to New Testament Studies from Reception History', *JSNT* 33:2 (2010), pp. 207–20.

[34] The digitised version of Codex Sinaiticus has made this dimension of reception readily accessible to a wide audience: http://codexsinaiticus.org.

9

The uses of the Bible in theology

W. T. DICKENS

No single telling can encompass all the persons, events and movements that have helped shape Christian theological uses of the Bible in the modern era. Different narratives serve different analytical purposes, with each slighting other legitimate objectives and interests. This chapter examines the topic from the perspective of the relatively recent revival of interest in pre-modern biblical interpretation. It offers an account of two predominant ways of construing the Bible in the modern era and contrasts them with a third, more recent one that tries to recover the best features of pre-modern theological interpretation without ignoring the strengths of the modern approaches.

The term theological interpretation needs some explanation. To those weary of endless theological debates in which biblical passages are cited without reference to their literary or historical context, or to those fearful of unchecked allegorical or typological whimsy, John Locke's seventeenth-century complaint still rings true: in hands like these, the Bible resembles 'a nose of wax, to be turned and bent, just as may fit the contrary orthodoxies of different societies'.[1] Locke promised his contemporaries, most of whom had lived through decades of religious and political turmoil, an 'unbiased' examination of the Scriptures.[2] Prescinding for the moment from the issue of figural interpretation and its possible deformations, it should be noted that Locke's interpretative goal has enthralled biblical critics and theologians for centuries. Nevertheless, owing primarily to late twentieth-century developments in philosophy and hermeneutics, a growing number of Christian theologians think an unbiased reading of Scripture is a chimera, the notion of objectivity it presupposes impoverished and the foundationalist epistemology on which it rests illusory. Increasingly, theological interpretation is seen as a ruled, self-critical

[1] Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, p. 295.
[2] Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, p. 3.

practice by which communities of believers try to develop faithful, ecclesially beneficial ways of reading the Bible.

Without ignoring the great variety of views and uses of Scripture by pre-modern theologians, recent scholarship has identified several characteristic hermeneutical conventions, each one of which has been contested, or has simply withered away in the modern era.[3] For most Christians before the mid-seventeenth century the Bible was held to tell the story of God's creative and redemptive dealings with the cosmos and, especially, humanity. The story's climax was the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Because in him God's purposes were held to be most clear, Jesus served as the interpretative centre in view of which this library of books containing many different literary genera was to be properly understood. The Bible was thus read as an interglossing, canonical whole, comprising the Old and New Testaments. Several different figural readings (allegory, tropology and anagogy) served to link both the Old with the New Testament and the world depicted in the Bible with that of pre-modern readers. In general, figural interpretations were regarded as derivative; they did not supplant the Bible's literal or plain sense. The primacy accorded the literal sense is evident in, among other places, the pre-modern notion that the rule of faith and, later, the creeds, were guides for understanding the texts in ways that served to build up the life of the people of God, rather than more accurate or compelling restatements of a purportedly univocal and unchanging meaning. While distinguishing the form of the text from its content, the letter from the spirit, pre-modern interpreters generally maintained that the latter was available to them only within the former. They therefore returned to the Bible regularly, with some, like Basil the Great or Francis, so immersed in the scriptural world that their writings are laced with biblical allusions and quotations. For them, and most other pre-modern interpreters, extra-biblical realities were understood in terms of biblical images, concepts and stories – facilitating this understanding being the principal function of the figural senses. Their world, their communities and their selves were inscribed into the story told by the Bible. Accordingly, it makes as much sense to say that in the pre-modern era the Bible interpreted readers as it does to say they interpreted the Bible. Widespread though this hermeneutical consensus was, it is important to clarify that it was formal rather than substantive. It pertained to how one approached the Bible, not what meanings it had or mediated. As any student of theological history knows, pre-modernity was no less riven by

[3] The following stand out from an enormous literature on the topic: Frei, *Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*; de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*; and Smalley, *Study of the Bible*.

theological disputes than modernity has been. One should therefore bear in mind that however convenient phrases such as 'the biblical narrative' or 'the biblical story' may be, they risk obscuring significant differences in the story Christians have believed the Bible narrates.

This formal, hermeneutical consensus dissolves in the modern era, with profound consequences for Christian theological interpretation of the Bible. Two interpretative strategies emerge, the description of which will occupy much of what follows. In that description, and in the subsequent one of relatively recent attempts to revive pre-modern hermeneutical conventions, limitations of space prevent me giving due consideration to the social, political, historical and ecclesiastical contexts of the authors whose works I cite. Readers wishing to pursue these issues should turn to the following chapters in this section and to the secondary works listed there. Nor should readers forget that there are some theologians whose works stand astride the boundaries of the typology offered here. My purpose is not to comprehend the whole range of a given theologian's works, but to provide apt illustrations of the hermeneutical options, tendencies and assumptions that are characteristic of the modern period. Although these modern developments necessarily incline theologians to view and use the Bible in certain ways and not others, they certainly do not constrain them to think or act in just one way and not another.

One approach that emerges during the modern era treats the Bible as an object of study, containing fixed, univocal meanings in propositional form, the truth of which experts seek to defend or deny. For most theologians adopting this hermeneutics, the content of the Bible can be read right off the page. For others, such as diachronic biblical scholars, it requires some ingenious ferreting. Nevertheless, for both the Bible contains information or data that, regardless of its truth or falsity, is determinate and unchanging. As we will see, what unites the diverse group of theologians and biblical scholars whose works reflect this approach is a conviction that the Bible in its entirety is not a narrative depiction of God's ways with the cosmos, as was true of most pre-modern theologians, but a compendium of doctrines and/or a record of social and historical events. (As we will see, this does not exhaust the ways diachronic biblical scholars can use their work or have it used by others.)

Often this view of the Bible served polemical rather than pastoral purposes. William Paley's *Natural Theology* (1802), which attempts to demonstrate the intelligibility of the biblical account (*sic*) of creation on the basis of an argument from design is, perhaps, the most famous example.[4] More than a century

[4] Paley, *Natural Theology*.

earlier Thomas Sherlock sought to justify the credibility of the Gospel records of Jesus' miracles in *The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus* (1730).[5] This way of reading Scripture is not limited to apologists. Thomas Woolston's *Six Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour* (1729) mounts a concerted attack on the New Testament stories of Jesus' miracles.[6] More humorously, Voltaire pokes fun at the Bible's claim that humanity descends from Adam and Eve, of whom, he observes, no one in the ancient world besides Jews and Christians had ever heard. 'Let us humble ourselves to the decrees of that Providence which has permitted so astonishing an oblivion.'[7] Whether applied by apologists or sceptics, this hermeneutics accentuates the objective evidence for – or against – the faith (a practice that Coleridge derided as evidential Christianity), regards the Bible as containing true or false propositions and defines its meanings in terms of conceptual and/or historical reference.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Protestant Princeton Theology and Catholic neo-scholasticism represent some features of this hermeneutics. Despite their differences, both share the goal of identifying and systematising the teachings of the Bible. Charles Hodge, professor at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1822 to 1880, conceived of the Scriptures as a 'store-house of facts' and of theological method as 'ascertaining what the Bible teaches', exhibiting 'the internal relation of those facts, one to another, and each to all', and identifying 'the principles or general truths which those facts involve'.[8] Hodge drew parallels between systematic theology so understood and the inductive approach favoured in the natural sciences since Francis Bacon. 'The Bible is to the theologians what nature is to the man of science.'[9] The purpose of the comparison is lost on contemporary audiences unless it is recalled that Hodge vigorously and repeatedly denounced Darwinian evolution. For Hodge both nature and the Bible were static repositories of information. The Bible was a textbook, propounding ideas about God's nature and will that were vouchsafed by God to its authors 'so that what they taught, God taught'.[10] Although the Catholic neo-scholastics were less interested in working out an explanation of their method vis-à-vis the Bible than were the Princeton theologians, they evince a similar tendency to treat it as a fixed

[5] Sherlock, *Trial of the Witnesses*.
[6] Woolston, *Six Discourses*.
[7] Voltaire, 'Adam', pp. 56–7.
[8] Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 10, 11, 18.
[9] Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, p. 10.
[10] Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, p. 156.

source of *dicta probantia* that bears what later critics would call an essentially heteronomous relation to the believing subject.[11]

Scholars pursuing biblical criticism's diachronic forms (e.g. source, form and redaction criticism) often share certain presuppositions with those whose work has been described thus far. Whether they are employing the critical methods to encourage or to undermine Christian devotion to God, diachronic critics assume that biblical meanings are referential and univocal. Julius Wellhausen's documentary hypothesis for pentateuchal authorship offers an example. Hermann Gunkel's categorisation of the Psalms by means of their oral prehistory and setting in life provides another. These and other diachronic biblical critics interpret the Bible by explaining the world behind the text (its author, historical and cultural setting, editorial intention, etc.). From their perspective a given text is a pointer, a more or less obscure referent that, when properly discerned, yields a single, unchanging meaning.

This approach to the Bible has considerable strengths. Emphasising the Bible's conceptual and historical dimensions can be commended for its legitimate, if exaggerated, concern to identify beliefs, practices and moral directives that are basic to Christian identity. And the frank acceptance of the need for prolonged reflection on the relation between Christian truth claims and the events of natural and social history should not go unnoticed. For its part, diachronic biblical criticism has yielded a staggering wealth of information about the ancient Near East and about the ideas and practices described in the Bible. We now have a much deeper appreciation for the development and refinement of ancient Jewish and Christian worldviews and practices, a vastly improved understanding of the complexity of the Bible's oral and literary prehistory and a clearer fix on the theological and ideological tensions within the text.

Notwithstanding these benefits, this way of reading Scripture, whether by biblical scholars or theologians, vitiated the pre-modern view of the Bible as a unified narrative. The sort of wholeness the Bible is construed to have (if any) lies in a system of doctrines and moral codes and/or in a reconstructed historical timeline. Moreover, the literary form of a given biblical text is no longer regarded as an indissoluble whole comprising mediating form and mediated content, but as a pointer to an event, doctrine, or injunction that lies, as it were, either behind or in front of the text. This single meaning is not tied to the text's present literary shape, but can be abstracted with the proper methods (whether pious or sceptical) and re-stated in more persuasive or edifying ways.

[11] See Rahner, 'Reflections on Methodology' and McCool, *Catholic Theology*.

In other words, the abstracted meaning replaces the literal or plain sense with something presumed to convey more cogently its truth (be that historical or conceptual referents, or both). This modern insistence upon identifying a single, fixed meaning of a given text stifles the Bible, imperilling its use as a guide to Christians in different historical and cultural circumstances. Even Luther and Calvin, who famously insisted upon the centrality of the literal sense and rejected the excesses of the *quadriga* (the pre-modern fourfold interpretive scheme), used typology both to link events and persons in their world with those depicted in the Bible and to connect the literal sense of Old Testament narratives to those in the New. Additionally, in its sceptical and diachronic biblical critical forms, this way of interpreting the Bible rests on the presupposition, characteristic of the Enlightenment, that an 'unbiased' biblical hermeneutics is possible and necessary. This throws into disrepute the pre-modern notion that the Bible is to be read in light of the rule of faith and for the benefit of the church. Hans-Georg Gadamer and others have demonstrated the incoherence of this prejudice against all prejudice.[12]

Another approach that becomes prominent in the modern era appears quite different from the one already described. Whereas the first attends primarily to the conceptual or historical dimensions of the Bible, this one focuses on the experiential – with some highlighting its personal and others its communal expressions. The emphasis is placed not on the objective evidence for or against the faith, but on the subjective experiences of the faithful and, in some instances, on humanity's orientation to or capacity for the divine. Once again we are dealing with a way of construing texts at least as much if not more than with examining one sort of passage rather than others. This strategy is found in the nineteenth century in the works of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the Catholic Tübingen School, liberal Protestantism and Catholic modernism. In the twentieth century it can be seen in the works of existential theologians, transcendental Thomists, revisionist theologians and some advocacy theologians. Its modern roots can be traced to the Pietist movement and the Baroque-era spiritual writers (e.g. Teresa of Ávila).

When saying that these theologians underline the Bible's experiential dimensions, I do not wish to imply that they necessarily contrasted their 'experiential' theologies with 'biblical' ones. Although Schleiermacher's theology has characteristically been understood in these disjunctive terms, he maintained that theologians and, indeed, all Christians are obliged to reconcile the 'representations' of their own 'spiritual states' with those of the apostles, in

[12] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 271–7, esp. p. 276.

order to guarantee that these states derive from 'the personal influences of Christ'.[13] The point is not to pit experiential and biblical theologies against one another but to say that, when reading the Bible, many modern theologians stress its descriptions of divine–human relationships and treat its doctrines, moral injunctions and historical events as media expressing such.[14]

Rudolf Bultmann offers an illuminating example of this way of reading the Bible.[15] His interpretive interest lies in identifying and then explicating in modern terms the good news it proclaims: Jesus Christ crucified and risen embodied a faithful relationship to God that, by grace, others may enjoy. The Bible's historical, doctrinal and ethical content (the *fides quae*) is treated as a more or less adequate expression of the believing self-understanding (the *fides qua*). For instance, when analysing the theology of Paul, Bultmann argued that for the apostle 'the proclaimed word is neither an enlightening *Weltanschauung* flowing out in general truths, nor a merely historical account which, like a reporter's story, reminds a public of important but by-gone facts'.[16] No; the *kerygma* is personal address that confronts the hearer, exposing his or her self-absorption, and demanding from him or her a decision. 'As true decision, as new self-understanding, [faith] is not a simply "having been convinced" or "having accepted", so that a man at some time or other is "converted to Christianity". As new self-understanding it is a *how*, a way of life itself.'[17]

David Tracy's *The Analogical Imagination* exemplifies a more recent version of this approach to the biblical texts. A phenomenological hermeneutics, derived largely from Paul Ricoeur, serves to bridge the great historical and cultural divide separating our era from ancient Israel and the early church. On Tracy's view the language of the Bible does more than refer behind the text (to its author, socio-cultural setting, editorial history and the like) and it does more than refer to its own semiotic structure. Like all religious classics the Bible also refers to a world in front of the text, by disclosing and evoking both a way of being human and a transcendent, ultimate reality with which such a

[13] Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, p. 587.

[14] For instance, Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, pp. 81, 92.

[15] The sharp difference between Schleiermacher's reliance upon the personal influences of Jesus to account for the growth of the church and Bultmann's dismissal of attempts to reconstruct Jesus' personality as 'a play of subjective imagination' does not affect the similarity to which I am drawing attention (Bultmann, *Theology*, vol. 1, p. 35). Along with Barth, Bultmann rejected Schleiermacher's definition of faith as a mode of human self-consciousness that could be communicated from one person to the next, but, unlike Barth and in concert with Schleiermacher, he treated the Bible primarily as expressing the failings and possibilities of human existence in the light of a judging and forgiving God.

[16] Bultmann, *Theology*, vol. 1, p. 307.

[17] Bultmann, 'Significance of the Historical Jesus', p. 245.

way of being is in accord. Proper interpretation is therefore defined by Tracy as an internal event of understanding that reduplicates or re-actualises the original internal event of understanding inscribed in the text by its author.[18]

Some advocacy theologians approach the Bible in analogous, if more socially focused, ways. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza develops a critical feminist hermeneutics intended to account for the fact that the Bible has been both an instrument of oppression and a source of empowerment in the millennia-long struggle by women for liberation from patriarchy. The Bible is best understood not as a compendium of the ancient church's teachings or creeds, nor a record of historical facts, but as an 'enabling resource, as bread not stone, as legacy and heritage, not only of patriarchal religion but also of women-church as the discipleship of equals'.[19] In contrast to those who read the Bible as a timeless archetype 'reflecting unchangeable ontological patterns and perennial models for human behavior and communal life', Schüssler Fiorenza conceives of it as 'an inclusive root-model of Christian church'.[20] The living revelation of God within the community of those struggling for liberation is the pastoral–theological criterion for the fourfold hermeneutics (of suspicion, proclamation, remembrance and creative actualisation) she proposes and employs.[21]

As with the first modern hermeneutical approach described, this one also has significant strengths. Chief among them is its refusal to define faith as simply the acceptance of a set of propositions. The concern to articulate God's gracious presence among the faithful – which Schüssler Fiorenza, along with many others, saw had been untenably defined by Bultmann in individualistic terms – is a perennial obligation of Christian theological interpretation. Christian theology has long addressed itself, and rightly so, to articulating how the redemption effected in and through Jesus Christ animates the common life of the church. This approach can also be lauded for an eagerness to engage the best of the secular disciplines, which is virtually non-existent in conservative theological circles. For instance, Bultmann had worked closely with Heidegger in the 1920s and used a significantly modified form of Heidegger's existentialism when interpreting the theological anthropologies of Paul and John. He also used – and made significant contributions to – early twentieth-century form criticism and research into the history of religions, thereby exemplifying how diachronic forms of critical biblical studies may be used to discern different modes of experience expressed in the Bible.

[18] Tracy, *Analogical Imagination*, p. 102.
[19] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread not Stone*, p. xvii; see also pp. 10–12.
[20] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread not Stone*, pp. 10, 39.
[21] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread not Stone*, pp. 15–22.

At the same time, the modern predilection for overcoming the differences between our times and those of the Bible by means of an anthropology (whether conceived individualistically or socially) is unmistakable. A common human capacity or shortcoming facilitates shared experiences that mediate understanding and enable appropriation. The troubling epistemological assumption seems to be that we can learn only from those who are at bottom the same as we are. In addition, this modern hermeneutical strategy operates with a referential definition of meaning, although the referent now points to modes of life rather than concepts and events. As we will see later in this chapter, this is an unnecessary circumscription of interpretive possibilities. We also find here an expressivist inversion of the relation of the faithful to doctrines and salvation history characteristic of the propositionalism described above. The latter's heteronomous view is replaced with an equally modern one that risks turning individuals or groups into the touchstone for assessing God's self-revelation. For some (e.g. Bultmann and Schüssler Fiorenza) this is explicit, with the hermeneutical corollary being that whatever does not cohere with the longings of the faithful is regarded as outmoded, or worse. This hermeneutics undermines the priority given in the pre-modern era to the Bible's literal sense, particularly when applied within a theological method that aims to summarise this ancient text in terms more meaningful to contemporary audiences. Under these circumstances, it is at least likely that the biblical text itself fades in importance when compared to the clarity of the summary. Despite the benefits of such interpretations, reading them is not equivalent to reading the Bible itself – any more than a paraphrase can stand in for a Shakespearean sonnet. There is also a pronounced tendency to disregard the canonical integrity of the Bible among those adopting this approach. Although not universally true, it is common. A paradigmatic instance is provided by Schleiermacher, for whom nothing from the Old Testament but the prophets and the Psalms should remain in the canon, and they only as appendices.[22]

Alternatives to these two modern approaches to the Bible are evident in works by Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar and, more recently, in those by post-liberals, post-conservatives, radical orthodox theologians and some advocacy theologians. Here, once again, the group is so large and internally diverse as to invite oversimplification, not least because few of these theologians adopt a rigorously consistent biblical hermeneutics. Yet they are linked by some shared interpretive convictions and goals that contrast with those of the modern era. Three bear mention.

[22] Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, p. 611.

Perhaps most significantly, these theologians share a concern to take seriously the canonical integrity of the Bible without ignoring its literary and theological complexity. To that end, various means have been employed, with some theologians using more than one: treating the Bible as a witness to divine revelation in Jesus Christ (Barth, Balthasar); as a narrative mediation of a symbolic world (Hans Frei, George Lindbeck); as the story of God's people (Stanley Hauerwas, Robert Jenson, Carlos Mesters); as resembling a musical score to be performed in active discipleship (Nicholas Lash); and as a divine speech act (Nicholas Wolterstorff) or communicative action (Kevin Vanhoozer).

Barth's Christological conception of the Bible as being at once fully human and fully divine, rather than merely one or the other or an amalgam of both, illustrates two of the implications of this effort to interpret the Bible in its canonical wholeness.[23] For Barth, the Bible is the 'Word of God Himself in Holy Scripture' when and as God uses this 'very human literary document' to convey its subject matter, namely 'the revelation of God in Jesus Christ'.[24] This means that the whole of Scripture is directed to this divine–human centre, with the Old Testament peering forwards and the New Testament gazing backwards to it. Accordingly, Barth maintained that theologians must remain attentive to the Old Testament's distinctive – and essential – theological voice. This also means that theologians, on Barth's view, should pay due attention to the particularities of the document that God has chosen as God's vehicle for communication. Biblical scholarship has a significant role to play in this regard, provided, on Barth's view, that its practitioners accept his proposed 'radical re-orientation concerning the goal to be pursued, on the basis of the recognition that the biblical texts must be investigated for their own sake to the extent that the revelation which they attest does not stand or occur, and is not to be sought, behind or above them but in them'.[25] Balthasar provides a distinguishable argument for the importance of learning from biblical scholars. For him the Bible is compelling not simply because of the divine content radiating through its literary components, but also because of the fittingness of the arrangement and interaction thereof. Consequently, he believed it useful for theologians to study diachronic biblical scholarship's investigations of the Bible's antecedents, as well as synchronic methods that focus on the received or final form of the text.[26]

[23] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/2, pp. 463, 499–501.
[24] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/2, pp. 457, 501, 486.
[25] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/2, p. 494; cf. p. 464.
[26] Von Balthasar, *Theology*, p. 112 n.5. See also von Balthasar, *Seeing the Form*, pp. 76, 198.

Those following this approach to Scripture also accept the pre-modern convention that the Bible is not a static repository but a dynamic vehicle of divine and human encounter with multiple meanings. Once again, there are distinguishable ways to elucidate this claim, with the salient similarity being a view of interpretation as an ongoing activity. According to Wolterstorff, God appropriates the Bible's ancient human discourse as divine speech in order to serve God's present – and varied – purposes.[27] To use Balthasar's terms, the Bible is not a script, but a fellow participant in the divine and human theodrama, mediating the living and therefore 'ever-new' Christ.[28] Frei and Lindbeck formulated their notion of biblical multivalence in terms of the Bible depicting a habitable world in which Christians would inscribe themselves, their communities and their world, primarily by means of figural interpretive devices.[29] The biblical interpretation by members of Latin American base ecclesial communities illustrates how this can work. In Carlos Mesters' account we find the following typological interpretation by 'Antonio, a man from the hinterlands of Ceará [Brazil]. . . . "We're like Abraham. We travel like him, without being sure where the journey will lead. Outside everything is uncertain, but inside we have a certainty: this is what God wants of us. If Abraham succeeded, we too will be able to succeed."'[30] For each of these authors and groups, biblical interpretation is less a matter of extracting a fixed meaning from an object than it is of engaging it in an ongoing conversation or understanding one's personal and communal identity in terms of the Bible's stories and images.

It has to be acknowledged that any attempt to locate oneself or one's group within the ongoing story of God's interactions with humanity poses risks. It can lead, as Robert Warrior has argued, to exalting one's own group at the expense of others and to supposing God warrants violence against one's enemies.[31] Although Barth may be justified in disparaging Locke's attempt to provide an impartial exegesis as 'comical', there is nothing funny about the need to curb such excesses of figural interpretation.[32] While it is unrealistic, *pace* Warrior, to expect a hermeneutical 'guarantee' against such tendencies,[33]

[27] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*.
[28] Von Balthasar, *Theo-drama*, p. 102.
[29] Frei, *Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* and Frei, '"Literal Reading"'. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* and Lindbeck, 'The Church's Mission'.
[30] Mesters, *Defenseless Flower*, p. 71. The *campesinos* of Solentiname in Nicaragua offer additional examples of allegorical and typological interpretation. See Cardenal, The *Gospel in Solentiname*.
[31] Warrior, 'A Native American Perspective'.
[32] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/2, p. 469.
[33] Warrior, 'A Native American Perspective', p. 283.

many 'Christian (or Jewish) scholars [aim] to understand and promote the Bible's significance in responsible ways and seek to correct its misuse'.[34]

Problematical typological interpretation is but one among a list of interpretive challenges confronting those Christians committed to biblical multivalence and respecting the whole canon as authoritative. As Ellen Davis has observed, the Bible is 'chock-full of embarrassing, offensive, and internally contradictory texts, texts we do not wish to live with, let alone live *by*'.[35] She has argued, provocatively, that this may be both intentional and salutary. Taking a cue from the Jewish biblical scholar Michael Fishbane, Davis contends that the Bible itself bears evidence of a 'critical traditioning' by means of which offensive or contradictory passages were 'retained and submitted to critique, direct and indirect'.[36] The Bible thereby schools attentive readers in the habit of charitably disagreeing with received interpretations of some biblical texts while hoping to find in them 'an earnest of God's blessing for those who seek God in faith'.[37] Some post-colonial biblical interpreters have taken a similar approach to the Bible as they uncover long-ignored inversions of unexamined assumptions about biblical heroes and villains.[38] Critical traditioning is thus compatible with those versions of the hermeneutics of suspicion that hope to serve the faithful without excising parts of the canon.

Finally, those theologians interested in abiding by certain pre-modern hermeneutical conventions also share a concern to overcome the debilitating dualism of sign and referent characteristic of most modern biblical interpreters. We have already heard Barth address the point when reorienting the goal of biblical criticism.[39] For his part, Balthasar held that the Bible is not a dispensable sign merely pointing to theological and historical truths, or expressing a graced form of life. At God's pleasure, it both manifests and bestows the glory of God (and therewith God's truth and goodness).[40] More recently, Lindbeck has expanded the notion of referentiality (or correspondence) to include not just terms in and of themselves, but their uses within a faithful form of life.[41] This is akin to Vanhoozer's definition of correspondence in terms of a covenantal relation. He and Nancey Murphy are keen to account for the variety

[34] Moberly, *The Bible, Theology, and Faith*, p. 32.
[35] Davis, 'Critical Traditioning', p. 177.
[36] Davis, 'Critical Traditioning', pp. 170, 168.
[37] Davis, 'Critical Traditioning', p. 178.
[38] Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, pp. 254–5.
[39] In addition to the citation given above (i.e. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, p. 494), see pp. 486, 493.
[40] Von Balthasar, *Seeing the Form*, p. 118.
[41] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, pp. 63–9.

of ways different speech acts render reality, a complexity they believe is given insufficient attention by their conservative forebears.[42] Together with the definition of theological truth as abiding 'in the body of the faithful' found in Milbank, and Lash's insistence (following the fourth evangelist) that truth be done, these efforts serve to underwrite the acceptance of the pre-modern notion that the Bible mediates a transcendent content without being strictly identified with it.[43]

It may well be that the hermeneutical conventions followed by most pre-modern Christians will enable current ones to avoid some of the pitfalls of the two main modern approaches to the Bible. And it may also be that, when coupled with a willingness to learn from diachronic and synchronic forms of biblical criticism and a concern to avoid misuses of the Bible, contemporary appropriations of the older hermeneutics will serve the church well. Time will tell. We can be certain, however, that the twenty-first century will bring new challenges to theological interpretation. Three should be noted, here. First, how will theologians deal with the growing biblical illiteracy in North Atlantic societies? The capacity to see the world through lenses provided by the Scriptures depends on a deep familiarity with its stories, images and concepts. Can the imaginative skills necessary to live in a biblically interpreted world be sustained in these societies, which are awash with advertisements inducing self-gratifying consumption? Secondly, how will the growth of Christianity in non–North Atlantic societies affect biblical interpretation? What hermeneutical resources can members of these societies, with their diverse artistic, musical, dramaturgical, ceremonial and liturgical traditions, bring to bear on the Bible? And, thirdly, how will Christians around the globe regard the sacred scriptures of other religious traditions, now that it has become obvious that most of humanity neither is nor will become Christian? Will Christians, apprehensive about fomenting interreligious violence, treat these texts as sources of wisdom and/or compelling expressions of the good life, with authority roughly equivalent to the Bible's? Or will Christians continue to privilege the Bible, while finding ways to conceive of members of other religions and their sacred texts as genuinely other without allowing that difference to provoke scorn or enmity?

[42] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*; Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism*, pp. 110–34.
[43] Milbank, 'The Last of the Last', p. 70; Lash, *Theology*, pp. 40–5.

10

Idealist/Hegelian readings of the Bible

PETER C. HODGSON

Hegel

It is widely assumed that Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) was an idealist – indeed, the pre-eminent philosopher of idealism. Hegel insisted, however, that 'idealism' is not to be understood as the antithesis of 'realism'; rather, it overreaches and embraces realism. In his system, 'idea' (*Idee*) is the final category of the logic (the science of the categories of thought), and as such it constitutes the transition to the philosophy of the real, comprising nature and finite spirit. The idea is the absolute unity of the concept and objectivity, of the rational and the real. An idea is something to be *realised*. Ideality is not a quality that stands outside and apart from reality; rather, it is the *truth* of the finite, of reality. In this sense, claimed Hegel, every genuine philosophy is idealism. He was at pains to distinguish his 'absolute' or 'speculative' idealism from the subjective idealism of Kantian philosophy, for which ideas are merely the product of human consciousness and not the 'universal divine idea' in which things have the substance of their being.[1]

This way of understanding the relationship between the ideal and the real gave Hegelianism a strong orientation to the historical, or to what Hegel called 'positivity'. 'Spirit' (*Geist*) is intrinsically historical in its never-resting process of self-distinguishing and self-relating, of developing new forms and overcoming oppositions; and it is teleologically oriented to achieving the fullest freedom and self-consciousness. This historicality applies to God as absolute spirit as well as to human beings as finite spirit. While his philosophy was radically oriented to history as a temporal process, Hegel did not attend to historical details with historical-critical precision. He commanded a great reservoir of historical information, liberally sprinkled through his lectures on the philosophies of history, art and religion. But he was suspicious of historical

[1] See *The Encyclopedia Logic*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), pp. 88–9, 152–3, 286.

science and historians, whom he likened to 'countinghouse clerks who keep the accounts of other people's wealth … without acquiring assets of their own'.[2] The *truth* of spirit, divine and human, is not something that can be proved from history. Hegel's ambivalence about history was noted by David Friedrich Strauss, who famously remarked that 'it annoyed him to see the heroic figures of antiquity assailed by critical doubts'.[3]

The tension is reflected in Hegel's insistence on both the 'positivity' and the 'spirituality' of religion. On the one hand the truth of Christianity (as the consummate religion) is mediated to consciousness in sensible, historical fashion through events and texts that necessarily have an element of external authority; but on the other its truth can be verified only by the witness of the Spirit. Everything first comes to humans in the form of education, instruction, doctrine, texts; but validity derives from the rationality of what thus comes. Verification may take the form of the positive, e.g. miracles and testimonies, but these must be put aside. Ironically (or playfully?), Hegel established this transcendence of the positive by citing biblical texts: Jesus rejects miracles as the criterion of truth, and Paul says that the letter kills while the Spirit gives life.[4]

Hegel had a high regard for the Bible. He remarked, for example, that with Luther's translation 'a folk-book has been placed in the hands of the people, a book in which the heart, the spirit, can find itself at home in the highest, infinite fashion. … The Bible is the means of deliverance from all servitude of spirit.'[5] Since the doctrines of Christianity are present in the Bible, and since it bears witness to the founding events on which this religion is based, the Bible is for Christians the basic resource. It is something that strikes a chord within them, something with which they resonate and from which they derive firmness of conviction. Many people do nothing but read and cite the Bible and live pious lives. But, remarked Hegel, theologians they are not; the Devil quotes the Bible too; and the most sharply opposed views can be demonstrated by an appeal to Holy Scripture, twisting it like a 'wax nose'.[6]

Hegel was led in this context to interesting remarks on biblical interpretation. 'As soon as religion is no longer simply the reading and repetition of passages, as soon as what is called explanation or interpretation begins, as soon

[2] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. I, p. 128.
[3] D. F. Strauss, *Streitschriften zur Vertheidigung meiner Schrift über das Leben Jesu*, 3 vols. (Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1841), vol. III, pp. 61–2.
[4] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, pp. 251–62.
[5] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, p. 319 n.191.
[6] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. I, p. 123.

as an attempt is made by inference and exegesis to find out the *meaning* of the words of the Bible, we embark upon the process of reasoning, reflection, thinking; and the question then becomes how we should exercise this process of thinking, and whether our thinking is correct or not.'[7] The question cannot be settled simply by referring to the Bible. Presuppositions and principles guide our interpretation, and these must be evaluated philosophically in the light of shifting cultural criteria. Hegel was especially suspicious of the exegesis of rationalist theologians, who imported presuppositions quite alien to the Bible. The superiority of the exegesis of speculative philosophy is not something that can be demonstrated empirically but follows from insight into the nature of spirit. This is an exegesis that does not set aside the basic doctrines of Christian faith, as rationalism does, but rather raises them from their representational form into a conceptual articulation.

Hegel's distinction between representation (*Vorstellung*) and concept (*Begriff*), and his way of connecting them, has played a fateful role in the history of idealist interpretations of the Bible. 'Representation' refers to the ordinary language of religion, couched in images, symbols, metaphors, myths, stories. Its basic problem, from Hegel's point of view, is that it understands the relations between things in a spatio-temporal dispersion; it objectifies an essentially rational and inward content. For example, it understands God as a 'supreme being' who lives somewhere 'beyond' the world; or it thinks of the consummation of all things as a future post-historical state. What the concept does is to 'grasp together' (*be-greifen*) elements that remain disparate in the 'placing before' (*vor-stellen*) the mind of images. But conceptual thinking makes use of materials furnished by representation; without imagistic and narrative content it would be dry and abstract. Moreover, the narrative form must be preserved in the conceptual rearticulation, for narrative contributes something essential to rationality. Logical relations take on a narrative form, and narrative unfolds logical patterns: Hegel's view shares more with a mystical–esoteric than a rational–empirical epistemology. So it is not a matter of simply dissolving representations into concepts but of a reciprocity between them. Hegel was not as clear about the reciprocity as he might have been. Or perhaps he lost sight of the reciprocity in the philosophical drive to absolute knowing (which is not, however, cut off from the determinacies of history but is mediated through them).[8]

[7] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, p. 258.

[8] See Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, chap. 6; Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, pp. 98–100, 111–15; O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel*, chap. 7.

The way in which representation is preserved in the concept may be seen from Hegel's own biblical exegesis. He offered his own readings, with scant reliance on critical literature. Scattered references are found in his works to the Pentateuch, Job, Psalms, the later Prophets and the Pauline epistles. But he focused his exegetical efforts on two stories: that of the fall of humanity in Genesis 3[9] and that of the life, ministry and death of Jesus in the Gospels.[10] With respect to the first, Hegel emphasised the 'contradictions' in the story. If knowledge of good and evil constitutes what is distinctive about humanity, why should God forbid the eating of the fruit? Is mortality to be viewed as punishment for sin or as the natural condition of finitude? Such contradictions reflect the ambiguities that are present in human consciousness and knowledge, and they point to a tragic aspect of human nature: the condition for the possibility of good includes also the possibility of evil. In order to rise out of the natural state and realise their spiritual potential, human beings must undergo a cleavage or separation in consciousness that produces anxiety, estrangement and efforts at self-securing. The knowledge that *makes* human beings also *wounds* them. The task of a speculative interpretation is to grasp this complex truth about humanity that is concealed/revealed in the story form.

Hegel believed that it can be shown philosophically that the unity of divinity and humanity must fully appear in a single human being through whom reconciliation is mediated to humanity as a whole. The task of his exegesis of the Gospels was to confirm that Jesus of Nazareth is this individual. He treated all of the Gospels as containing historical materials and ignored critical questions about differences between the Synoptic and Johannine accounts. He was not interested in such questions but rather in grasping the 'portrayal' (*Darstellung*) of Jesus in the Gospel stories. On Hegel's reading, Jesus is portrayed as one whose central message is that of inwardness and love, who demands a revolutionary breaking away from all established orders (familial and economic), who is aware of his special relationship with God, and who anticipates death as the consequence of his ministry. Hegel warned against any exegesis that attempts to tone down or flatten out the radicalism of Jesus' message and self-understanding. Rather, the words of Jesus confirm that he is in fact what he becomes for the community of faith, the son of God who reveals the mind and heart of God. The life and death of this teacher are in 'conformity' with his teaching and 'strictly adequate' to the idea of divine–human unity. Hegel went so far as to say that the speech and activity of Jesus 'is essentially the

[9] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, pp. 101–8, 205–11, 300–10.
[10] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, pp. 115–31, 216–22, 316–28.

work of God – not as something suprahuman that appears in the shape of an external revelation, but rather as God's working in a human being, so that the divine presence is essentially identical with this human being'.[11] Hegel knew that ultimately only faith can see that *God* is present in Christ, but he believed that it is important to show that there are warrants for this spiritual witness, that it does not run counter to the historical witness. Without a congruence between faith and history, faith would be undercut: it would have as its object a mythical figure, not a real historical person. The ideality of divine–human unity takes on the reality of flesh and blood, culminating in crucifixion, the 'death of God'.

The two principal disciples of Hegel in biblical studies were David Friedrich Strauss (1808–74) and Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860). Strauss severed Hegel's mediation of the real and the ideal, *Vorstellung* and *Begriff*, whereas Baur re-established it on a critical basis. In what follows the focus is on Christology because it is what connects the three thinkers in their interpretations of the Bible.

Strauss

Strauss rendered the historical correlate of faith uncertain in the same way that Ludwig Feuerbach made its metaphysical correlate uncertain; together they accomplished a deconstruction of the Hegelian system. Strauss interpreted Hegel monistically, as a philosopher of identity, and he embraced the pantheism that he thought was implicit in Hegel's philosophy. In his revolutionary book, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, published in 1835, just four years after Hegel's death, he set out to demonstrate that the Christ of faith is precisely a mythical figure; the real historical Jesus is something quite different.

Strauss intended to resolve what he took to be the ambiguity or tension in the *Vorstellung–Begriff* distinction. The biblical *Vorstellungen* presenting the story of Jesus must be annulled as history and replaced by a dogmatic reconstruction of Christology in strictly conceptual terms. The forms of imaginative and conceptual thinking must be kept apart, for there is no way to mediate between them such that one is preserved in the other. Strauss hoped, rather naively, that concepts can fulfil the same religious needs as metaphors, symbols, myths and stories. At the same time he recognised that preachers accommodate themselves to the needs of congregations. He had no intention

[11] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, p. 320. See Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, chap. 8.

to offer an accommodation in his scholarly work: instead of a hermeneutics of symbols and religious myths, he proposed a destruction and substitution.

The destructive work was accomplished in rhetorically brilliant fashion. Both supernaturalism and rationalism accept the stories contained in the Gospels as historically authentic, but they interpret them differently: the supernaturalists find repeated evidence of the miraculous work of God in the story of Jesus, whereas the rationalists pull back the 'drapery' of the sacred history to disclose a purely natural explanation. In Strauss's presentation these interpretations are made to refute each other, the arguments of rationalists used against supernaturalists, and vice versa. Into the ensuing void enters the mythical interpretation, upon the application of which the contradictions in the Gospel stories disappear in a single stroke. The mythical interpretation, which Strauss acquired not from Hegel but from the Mythical School of eighteenth-century biblical scholarship,[12] assumes that religion is by definition imaginative and therefore mythical; myths are expressions in story-like form of temporally conditioned religious *Vorstellungen* such as the idea of a messianic saviour of Israel. Whenever such *Vorstellungen* are present in a Gospel pericope, it must be assumed to be unhistorical. Strauss reinforced this positive criterion of the unhistorical with a negative criterion based on the rational laws of history, and he concentrated his critical efforts on individual stories or units abstracted from their literary and historical context. Thus, as Baur pointed out, he was unable to construct a history of tradition, and his method was essentially rationalistic rather than historical-critical.[13]

This method did, however, yield a considerable residue of historical material for Strauss. As far as the authentic sayings and teachings of Jesus are concerned, there is little that is original or profound in them on Strauss's reading, and he devoted only one of his work's twenty chapters to this topic. But it is an 'indisputable fact' that Jesus had a messianic consciousness and came to identify himself with the Son of Man who would return on the clouds of heaven to terminate the existing dispensation and usher in the reign of God. Strauss wrote: 'Those who shrink from this view merely because they conceive that it makes Jesus an enthusiast [*Schwärmer*] will do well to reflect how closely such hopes corresponded with the long cherished messianic idea of Jesus, and how easily, in that day of supernaturalism, . . . an idea, in itself extravagant, . . .

[12] See Christian Hartlich and Walter Sachs, *Der Ursprung des Mythosbegriffes in der modernen Bibelwissenschaft* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1952), chaps. 3, 5.

[13] On Strauss's method see the editorial introduction to Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, pp. xxv–xxxi; on his critical results and their Christological significance see pp. xxxi–xxxvi.

might allure even a reasonable man beneath its influence.'[14] One might have thought that such a mythical idea is attributable to the Gospel tradition rather than to Jesus. But Strauss welcomed the conclusion that Jesus was in fact an apocalyptic enthusiast – not only that, but that he went to his death a bitterly disappointed man, persuaded that God had abandoned him and his messianic plan.

The conclusion was to be welcomed because it required a dogmatic reconstruction of Christology that Strauss sketched in a 'concluding dissertation' to his work.[15] Here he argued that the full manifestation of the idea of God–manhood need not, indeed cannot, have been restricted to a single individual. 'Is not the idea of the unity of the divine and human natures a real one in a far higher sense, when I regard the whole race of mankind as its realization, than when I single out one man as such a realization?'[16] Thus Strauss concluded that the historical data concerning Jesus do not adhere to the content of Christian faith but only to its imaginative form. Jesus was at best a fortuitous occasion for the development of the idea of humanity. The science of our time no longer limits the idea to such an individual. The object of faith can no longer be a sensible empirical fact but a spiritual and divine idea, which finds its confirmation not in history but in philosophy. These conclusions stood at a far remove from Hegel, for whom the idea of humanity as a whole was precisely an abstraction by contrast with the concreteness of an individual.[17]

Baur

Baur was a half-generation older than Strauss, whom he taught at the theological seminaries in Blaubeuren and Tübingen, but his ideas matured more slowly, and his major contribution to New Testament studies came only after, and partly in response to, Strauss's *Life of Jesus*. Baur also distinguished himself in the fields of church history and history of dogma, with a range of expertise far broader than is common today.

Connected with this broad range were his reflections on historical process and knowledge. In these reflections he showed himself to be deeply influenced by Hegel even as he strengthened the historical aspect of Hegel's thought. The

[14] Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, p. 296.
[15] Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, pp. 757–84.
[16] Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, p. 780.
[17] The radicalism of this conclusion was modified in the third edition of the work (1838) but reinstated in the fourth (1840). The modifications appeared again in Strauss's *New Life of Jesus* of 1864 but were retracted in *The Old Faith and the New* of 1872. See *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, pp. xxxvi–xlv.

self-actualisation of God is the ground of the historical process. History is God's triune life *ad extra* – a process moving through phases of unity, differentiation/estrangement and reconciliation. Since history is a process of the unfolding of consciousness or spirit, the dialectical movement of ideas can be traced in its materials. Thus we should expect that history develops through the interplay of opposing tendencies; but these, Baur insisted, must be discovered empirically rather than imposed *a priori*. The pattern of the Hegelian dialectic appeared in various modifications throughout Baur's biblical and historical studies, functioning as a heuristic or structuring device. But the historical research and detailed interpretations were his own. Baur's immense erudition in the history of the Bible, church and theology far exceeded anything attained by Hegel. The task of the historian, he claimed, is to align his own subjectivity with the objective movement of the subject matter itself, while recognising that the construal of this movement is shaped by the critical consciousness of the historian.[18]

'Idea' is a principal category of historical interpretation for Baur. An idea is an expression, form, or actualisation of thought. Historical process takes place at the point of intersection of idea and manifestation or appearance (*Erscheinung*). Baur insisted that these elements can be neither identified nor separated. A critical tension must remain between them. If a historical appearance is simply identified with the idea that indwells it, then it is absolutised, as with claims on behalf of the Catholic Church. If the idea hovers above and never enters into the realities of history, then a Gnostic or docetic worldview results. This tensive interplay of idea and reality shapes Baur's interpretation of the New Testament writings and the historical figure of Jesus.

The written documents of Christianity bear witness to its origin. Faith regards them as Holy Scripture, the Word of God. But if faith is not to be merely authoritarian, it can attain to this certainty only by means of investigation and knowledge. 'The more highly faith esteems these writings, the more it is incumbent upon it that it hold nothing as the Word of God that does not allow itself to be established historically as the Word of God.'[19] Protestantism replaces the authority of church and tradition with that of Scripture, but this Protestant principle is warranted only on the basis of the critical method, which must be applied to Scripture to distinguish, in so far as possible, its authentic content from its conditioned forms. The task of historical investigation is

[18] On Baur's interpretation of history and historical knowledge see Hodgson, *The Formation of Historical Theology*, chap. 4.

[19] Academic Opinion of 20 December 1835 (manuscript, University of Tübingen library).

never finished because each generation brings new insights and questions to bear on the texts. Baur was convinced that true faith and true science nourish each other. Science cannot escape presuppositions and commitments. Faith requires the continual prodding and testing of historical criticism to avoid falling into idolatry or fanaticism. Faith lives with and from the probable certainties of history: it is the acceptance as existentially true for oneself of that which is precisely always only probably certain in the historical mode.

The New Testament writings must be treated as historical documents belonging to history. Like all such documents, they reflect the motives and interests of their authors. Two fundamental rules apply to biblical interpretation: first, every New Testament writing must be placed in its context in the history of primitive Christianity; secondly, the stories contained in these writings must be judged on the basis of the historical position and theological tendencies of the writings. Baur called his method 'tendency criticism' because all religious writings, the Gospels in particular, exhibit a theological orientation or interest, and it is only when these tendencies have been identified that it is possible to evaluate how the historical contents are used and to judge their reliability. It is indeed difficult, Baur acknowledged, to distinguish the actual teaching of Jesus from the literary contexts in which it is reported, but an effort must be made to do so because the ultimate interest is in the facts portrayed by the writings.

Baur began his New Testament studies with research on the Pauline and deutero-Pauline epistles, which helped him to establish a history of Christian origins, and from there he moved to a study of the Gospels. He emphasised that primitive Christianity was not a period of perfect unity but of conflict and struggle between particularising (Judaising) and universalising (Catholicising) tendencies, and that the documents of the New Testament reflect various stances vis-à-vis that struggle. He concluded that the narratives and speeches of the Fourth Gospel are controlled by an idealising worldview that renders them historically inauthentic; they serve the Johannine thesis of the incarnation of the divine Logos. But, he claimed, as the historical value of John declines, that of the Synoptics increases. He became convinced that Matthew is the earliest of the Gospels, but it too reflects its own tendencies and is not an eyewitness account. It is closest to the religious consciousness of Jesus himself when it represents him as saying that he has come not to abolish but to fulfil the law and the prophets.[20]

[20] See Baur, *Kritische Untersuchungen*. On tendency criticism and Baur's study of the New Testament see Hodgson, *The Formation of Historical Theology*, pp. 196–220.

The reason for this is that Christianity emerges out of Judaism, and Jesus himself marks the juncture and transition between Judaism and Christianity. Historical science does not regard the origin of Christianity as a miracle but as a historical phenomenon with a context and antecedents. It must be studied in relation to the Roman empire, Greek philosophy and Judaism. It is closest to Judaism in its consciousness of God and its religious piety, but it is not reducible to its context. Something new emerges that is connected with the figure of Jesus. Baur's thesis was that 'the peculiar character of Christianity consists in the fact that it is everything it is solely through the person of its founder'.[21] Here Baur was very close to Schleiermacher as well as Hegel, but he differed from them in attempting to establish this claim on historical-critical grounds.

Two aspects demand attention: the teaching of Jesus and his person. In one respect his teaching lies beyond all historical development; it is what is immediate and original for Christian faith. But in another respect it stands in continuity with Judaism as a radicalisation of Jewish religious consciousness. It is a teaching that is penetrated by the deepest sense of both the antithesis and unity between earth and heaven; it demands a profound moral inwardness, obedience and universality of intention; and it calls for an absolute relation to God and God's righteousness. This teaching is integrally related to his person, which, by virtue of the intensity of his God-consciousness, exemplifies and actualises the content of his teaching. For Baur this God-consciousness comes to expression especially in the Son of Man sayings. But the Son of Man with whom Jesus identifies himself is the earthly, suffering figure, not the apocalyptic one coming on the clouds of heaven. Thus the reference is to Jesus' humanity, not his divinity.

As far as Jesus' divinity is concerned, Baur interpreted it in Hegelian fashion, but with an interesting variation. While Hegel did not hesitate to affirm that the idea of God–manhood, or of divine–human unity, becomes fully incarnate (or manifest) in Jesus, Baur expressed this conviction in a negative form: in Jesus the *non-being* of the idea of God–manhood is at its absolute *minimum*. This was his way of protecting the non-identity of the divine and the human, the tensive character of the relationship between idea and reality, which is required by a historical-critical consciousness. 'The absolute idea is the essential unity of God and humanity, and Christ . . . can be thought of as representing in himself nothing other than the one who is penetrated by the idea in the most intensive fashion and who completes its reality up to the limit possible

[21] Baur, *Das Christenthum und die christliche Kirche*, p. 22; cf. pp. 1–40 on the origin of Christianity.

for a single individual. But at the same time it remains true and incontestable that the individual stands under the idea.'[22]

In conclusion, Baur's portrayal of Jesus contrasted sharply with that of Strauss, for whom Jesus' teaching contained little that is original or important and Jesus' God-consciousness bordered on fanaticism and illusion. Baur did not simply return to Hegel: he introduced a qualification that reflects a more thoroughly historical perspective; and his exegesis of the Gospel stories, while similar to Hegel's in its portrayal of Jesus, was critical rather than intuitive.

[22] Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Die christliche Lehre von der Versöhnung* (Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1838), pp. 623–4. On Baur's Christology see Hodgson, *The Formation of Historical Theology*, pp. 100–21, 221–37.

11

Liberal readings of the Bible and their conservative responses

MARK CHAPMAN

This chapter addresses the institutional context of the study of the Bible both in the university and the church, primarily in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Where other chapters discuss detailed methods of exegesis, this one investigates the broader problems of biblical interpretation which derive primarily from the questioning of inherited authority structures in both church and state. The study of the Bible was one aspect of the wider study of theology which naturally took different forms in different places depending to a large extent on the relationships of church, university and state. The various European nations, and later the United States, with their distinctive ecclesiastical and political structures, provided different environments for the pursuit of theology. While this chapter focuses chiefly on nineteenth-century Germany, where theological problems were discussed most keenly, it also offers comparisons with the development of theology and biblical studies in both England and the United States.

The starting point for the nineteenth century rests in the Enlightenment challenge to traditional forms of authority. At the end of the eighteenth century the Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) named his own age 'an age of criticism'. 'Religion through its sanctity', he went on, 'and lawgiving through its majesty, may seek to exempt themselves from it. But they then awaken just suspicion, and cannot claim the sincere respect which reason accords only to that which has been able to sustain the test of free and open examination.'[1] Given that nothing was immune from criticism, Kant tried to redefine the relationships between the traditional faculties of the university. Theology – traditionally the queen of the sciences – could no longer be exempt from scientific investigation, and had to be dethroned by the philosophical

[1] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1929), A xii.

faculty.[2] To subject the supernatural truths of Christianity revealed in Scripture to critical scrutiny was part of a wider cultural phenomenon which Peter Gay has described as a 'recovery of nerve'.[3] The theological problems of the nineteenth century were part of the wider intellectual ferment provoked by the application of this thoroughgoing critical method to the inherited supernatural modes of authority of the *ancien régime* which were often justified in theological terms. The dichotomy between 'liberal' and 'conservative' makes sense only in relation to this more general problem of authority – political, religious and social – which was at the heart of the massive cultural and intellectual revolutions and reactions through the nineteenth century.

While some characterisations of nineteenth-century theology have regarded it as generally hostile to scientific thought, the relationship of theology to the rise of criticism and the modern university is far more ambiguous. A few theologians accepted to a greater or lesser extent the critical principles of Enlightenment thought, questioning the presuppositions of all knowledge, however much this might challenge the dominant theories of inspiration and ecclesiastical authority. The quest for truth overrode any other consideration. Given the control of the theological faculties by church and state there was little room for such figures, at least at the professional level. Some, including Bruno Bauer (1809–82) of Berlin, were driven out of the university and church altogether for their radical views. Others reacted to criticism by trying to repristinate the earlier supernatural models of authority and resisting any questioning of sacred knowledge, among them Ernst Hengstenberg (1802–69) of Berlin, who sought to interpret the Old Testament in strictly literalist and Lutheran terms. However, the vast majority fell into neither camp. While promoting critical biblical and historical scholarship, most theologians sought a source of authority which was largely immune from criticism and which could therefore be accorded a high degree of certainty as a basis for faith. Where for Kant the goal of knowledge, the 'thing-in-itself', remained beyond apprehension, most religious thinkers located authority in some sort of experience or direct apprehension of the religious object which offered them a far greater sense of security. Such figures, including F. D. E. Schleiermacher (1768–1834), first professor of theology at Prussia's flagship University of Berlin, and often seen as the father of modern theology, regarded themselves as 'mediating' rather than 'liberal' theologians. Schleiermacher explained to a friend that he

[2] Immanuel Kant, 'The Contest of Faculties', in Hans Reiss (ed.), *Kant's Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 176–90.

[3] Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment* (New York: A. Knopf, 1967), ii, pp. 3–8.

sought 'to create an eternal covenant between the living Christian faith and an independent and freely working science, a covenant by the terms of which science is not hindered and faith is not excluded'.[4] To describe such theologians, who sought to interpret the tradition and to make it relevant for the present, as 'liberal' is misleading.

Germany

In the 1920s the term 'liberal theology' was used by detractors as a blanket term to cover those theologians who based their theology (and thus their understanding of God) on human experience and the study of history. For instance, one of the pioneers of the so-called dialectical theology, Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976), who became professor of New Testament in Marburg, reacted against what he called the 'Jesus-piety' of his predecessors. Their theology, he claimed, rested on human experience rather than the true object of theology: God himself. The liberal method was, he felt, a deception since 'the world which faith wishes to lay hold of is totally unattainable with the assistance of scientific knowledge'. Instead, for Bultmann, God meant 'the radical negation and overcoming of everything human'. The purpose of theology was thus to 'free piety from the completely untenable bond with history which "liberal theology" wants to retain', or what he called its 'pantheism of history'.[5] Others, including Karl Barth (1886–1968), went even further, seeing liberal theologians, and particularly the leading representatives, Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930) and Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923), as inevitably compromised by their high estimation of what he regarded as the degenerate culture which had led to the horrors of the First World War. This meant that he could no 'longer follow either their ethics and dogmatics or their understanding of the Bible and of history. For me, nineteenth-century theology no longer held any future.'[6]

Although the different theologians tarred with the liberal brush displayed a variety of approaches and emphases (and most would have refused to use the term), the theological reaction after the First World War usefully reveals three related characteristics, which were shared by a significant number of

[4] F. Schleiermacher, *On the Glaubenslehre: Two letters to Dr Lücke*, trans. James Duke and Francis Fiorenza (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1981), p. 63. On this area see Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press), pp. 95–132.

[5] R. Bultmann, 'Liberal Theology and the Latest Theological Movement', in *Faith and Understanding*, pp. 28–52 at p. 29.

[6] Karl Barth, 'Evangelical Theology in the Nineteenth Century' (1956), in *The Humanity of God* (London: Collins, 1961), pp. 11–33 at p. 14.

theologians in their efforts to come to a degree of reconciliation between Christianity and modernity. First, as Bultmann noted, there was the stress on the historicisation of all thought, which made a crucial impact on biblical studies. This tendency was labelled 'historicism' in distinction to the 'naturalism' and rationalism which had been the particular characteristic of much eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought. The intellectual revolution which investigated the historical development of all aspects of thought and culture was particularly strong in Germany under the impact of the historian Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), as well as the all-pervasive influence of the Berlin philosopher G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831) (discussed in chapter 10). The problems of historical contingency raised enormous questions for biblical studies: as G. E. Lessing (1729–81) put it famously at the end of the eighteenth century: 'If no historical truth can be demonstrated, then nothing can be demonstrated by means of historical truths.' This lack of certainty in history presented what he called 'the ugly, broad ditch' when it came to the foundations for knowledge.[7] Despite much resistance, the study of theology, which had hitherto rested on the unquestioned assumptions of its status as revealed truth underpinned by an inspired Scripture, was gradually transformed by this revolution. In a number of programmatic essays written around the turn of the twentieth century, Troeltsch, the leading theorist of the use of history in theology, differentiated between what he called the older 'dogmatic' and the modern historical methods.[8]

Crucial in the reconfiguration of theology along critical-historical lines was Schleiermacher's programme for the theological curriculum at Berlin. The university had been founded in 1810 as a self-consciously 'modern' institution which emphasised learning for the sake of learning, and which laid the foundations for the modern research university. Although theology remained a 'higher' faculty, along with medicine and law, in that it was geared towards the education of a profession which would provide a necessary function in the state (the cure of souls), its constituent parts were nevertheless all to be approached using the canons of modern scientific method. In his *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology* Schleiermacher claimed that theology was a 'positive science' since its unity came not from its object of study, but from its

[7] G. E. Lessing, *Lessing's Theological Writings*, ed. Henry Chadwick (London: A. & C. Black, 1956), p. 56.

[8] Ernst Troeltsch, 'Historical and Dogmatic Method in Theology', in *Religion in History: Essays Translated by James Luther Adams and Walter F. Bense* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), pp. 11–32.

orientation to a particular task.[9] This meant that the Bible was to be studied not primarily as the repository of supernatural knowledge, but as part of 'historical theology', as the principal source material for the contemporary phenomenon of Christianity (along with church history). No book of the Bible could be completely understood unless attention was paid to the historical context in which it was produced.[10] Schleiermacher also emphasised the importance of textual study, philology and hermeneutics; the Bible was to be investigated like any other ancient book. While his own application of the historical method to the Bible was modest and unsophisticated, his highly influential demarcation of the theological curriculum encouraged others to carry out critical scientific research into the biblical material.

Among Schleiermacher's colleagues at Berlin, it was W. M. L. de Wette (1780–1849), professor of Old Testament from 1810 until his dismissal in 1819, who adopted the most thoroughgoing historical-critical approach to the Bible. In his *Contributions to Old Testament Introduction* (1806–7) he pioneered an approach to the biblical narratives which regarded them as literature in their own right, rather than simply as source books for ancient history. Crucially, they were understood as reflecting the age in which they were written. At the same time he also developed a theory of religion where he was able to differentiate between the spontaneous and simple religion of the early Hebrews and the more developed religion of the Jewish priests. This betrays something of the influence of the post-Kantian quest for a knowledge of the thing-in-itself. Influenced by J. F. Fries, de Wette regarded religion as an intuition of eternal values. To some extent this meant that the Bible could be read as a history of the institutionalisation and decline of the simple core of religion, which was influential on a later generation of scholars including Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), as well as those biblical scholars from the end of the nineteenth century, including Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932) and Wilhelm Bousset (1865–1920), who were members of the so-called History of Religion School (discussed in a separate chapter). Biblical texts were studied as records of religious experience.

De Wette exemplifies the second aspect of liberal theology as defined by the dialectical theologians: the foundation of religion and theology on the immediacy of human experience. Others moved in a similar direction, understanding themselves as in a direct and experiential communication with God

[9] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology*, trans. Terrence N. Tice (Atlanta: John Knox, 1966), §§1, 6.
[10] Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline*, §§140, 141.

or Christ. In his *magnum opus*, *The Christian Faith*, Schleiermacher begins by stressing religion as a universal aspect of human experience: 'The piety that forms all the basis of all religious communities is neither a knowing nor a doing, but a determination of feeling.'[11] Religion thus did not stem from a revelation mediated either by an institution or a book, but was instead a direct (and natural) 'consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God'.[12] Christian dogmatics, which, like biblical exegesis, was understood as an aspect of historical theology, amounted to a description of this feeling in terms of a particular historical tradition. This emphasis on feeling betrays something of Schleiermacher's Pietist upbringing, which influenced his understanding of the Bible, especially the Gospels, which were read as evidence for the 'God-consciousness' of Jesus himself. He was understood not as 'something utterly supernatural, nor something completely suprarational' but as a human figure who was 'saturated' with the highest degree of God-consciousness.[13] The experience of the person of Christ as recorded in the Gospels, which, according to Schleiermacher, showed him to be totally in tune with his Father, thus became the beginning (and to some extent the totality) of the Christian religion. While Schleiermacher's understanding of Christ was consistent, it could not survive serious critical-historical investigation of the Gospel accounts.

Later in the nineteenth century other German theologians sought different solutions to the problem of history which rested less on direct experience and more on a distinctive kind of knowledge. The most influential teacher of a whole range of theologians and biblical scholars was Albrecht Ritschl (1822–89), professor of theology at Göttingen. Reacting against his idealist teachers, he sought to delineate between the spheres of nature and spirit, and between theoretical and practical knowledge, in which he included religious knowledge. Faith was the basis of the knowledge of God, which depended not on metaphysics, but solely on revelation through God's Son. The objective redemption effected by Christ inspired activity motivated by love, which led to an 'ethical organisation of humanity and which establishes blessedness both in divine adoption and in the kingdom of God'.[14] Ritschl claimed Christ as the founder of such an ethical kingdom. For this he was soon subjected to much

[11] Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, §3.
[12] Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, §4.
[13] Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, §13.
[14] Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive Development of the Doctrine*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1900), p. 168.

criticism from biblical scholars. His son-in-law, Johannes Weiss (1863–1914), for instance, claimed that there could 'be no talk of an inner-worldly development of the Kingdom of God in the understanding of Jesus'.[15] Instead, Jesus' understanding of the kingdom of God was steeped in the apocalyptic categories of his time. This presented an insurmountable gulf between Jesus' ideas and the concepts of dogmatics: 'Every dogmatics which employs Biblical concepts is always in the more or less clearly perceived danger of stripping these concepts of their original historical character by reinterpreting or converting them to new purposes in accordance with new viewpoints.'[16] Weiss pointed to the most serious problem of the theological use of biblical categories: 'Though in retrospect *we* certainly can say as a judgement of faith that Jesus established the Kingdom of God within his Church, it is just as certain that such a conception or expression is far-removed from the sphere of Jesus' ideas.'[17] Biblical and dogmatic concepts (and that meant biblical and dogmatic presentations of Christ himself) could thus be understood to be two quite different things.

Not surprisingly, some of Ritschl's successors sought other ways out of this impasse. Wilhelm Herrmann (1846–1922), professor at Marburg, for instance, differentiated completely between the worldview of science and that of faith. Faith thereby became immune from any criticism, and subject to its own distinctive set of laws. No amount of historical investigation could ever prove faith false – this would simply be to commit a category error. This dualism paved the way for his pupil Rudolf Bultmann's approach to biblical hermeneutics after the First World War with its sharp distinction between empirical and 'authentic' history. Other students of Ritschl continued to emphasise the importance of religious experience as a means for bridging Lessing's ditch. Indeed, a lingering Pietism can be detected in Adolf von Harnack, the greatest historian of the early church, who dominated theology and broader academia in the early years of the twentieth century. Although his scientific approach to theology was much criticised for its apparent lack of orthodoxy, his extempore lectures on the essence of Christianity given in 1899–1900[18] reveal an extraordinarily simple approach to the Christian faith. The Gospel message consisted merely of the fact that God was the Father, and that the human soul was of infinite value. Jesus revealed an absolute religion of 'eternal life in the midst

[15] Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, trans. Richard H. Hiers and D. L. Holland (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), p. 114.
[16] Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation*, p. 59.
[17] Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation*, p. 79.
[18] Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*, trans. T. B. Saunders (London: Williams & Norgate, 1904).

of time'[19] embodied in the 'plain and simple' truths of his personality. While Harnack's historical criticism of texts, including the New Testament, could be far-reaching, his version of Christianity was quite immune from historical criticism. Most liberal theologians, including biblical scholars, were able to avoid the radical conclusions of the historical-critical method by resorting to an alternative source of revelation in religious experience or a special sort of knowledge. The conservative theologian Martin Kähler (1835–1912) of Halle drew this distinction to its logical conclusion, differentiating between the Christ of faith as proclaimed by the church and the Jesus of history, the mysterious figure spoken of by historians, about whom little could be said.[20]

The third characteristic of 'liberal theology' outlined by the dialectical critics was its association with – and frequent positive estimation of – the achievements of German culture. Rather than simply having its own distinctive method or subject matter, theology was understood to be part of the broader world of scholarship, and of vital importance in the public sphere. This was bound to give cause for concern to theological purists. Prominent public figures such as Harnack, who, as well as being professor in Berlin, was also director of the Royal Library, secretary of the Prussian Academy of Science and president of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society, were derided as 'Culture Protestants'. Theologians and biblical scholars participated in public networks to disseminate their thought, which included the Evangelical Social Congress, and journals such as *Die christliche Welt*. Many were concerned that their findings should reach as wide an audience as possible. The publisher J. C. B. Mohr produced a series of scholarly books, the *Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher*, aimed at a popular audience, to which many biblical scholars contributed. Indeed, the period before the First World War was one of the few times when professional biblical scholars made concerted efforts to publicise their results far beyond the academy.

England

English theology developed very differently. There was much suspicion of German thought – indeed, one of the leading historians of the nineteenth century, and translator of Schleiermacher, Connop Thirlwall (1797–1875), claimed that 'knowledge of German subjected a divine to the … suspicion

[19] Von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*, p. 8.
[20] Martin Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964).

of heterodoxy'.[21] Even moderate uses of the historical-critical method could provoke much controversy, as happened with H. H. Milman's *History of the Jews* (1828–9), a very traditional although modestly rationalist account of the Old Testament. The English university system was slow to reform itself along scientific lines. Theology, although compulsory for all students at Oxford and Cambridge, remained confessional, and did not become an undergraduate discipline in either university until as late as the 1870s. Indeed, for much of the century it was an 'amateur' pastime pursued by parish or cathedral clergy. Many of the most important theologians, including Thomas Arnold (1795–1842), headmaster of Rugby school, were steeped in the classics, adopting a humanist tradition much influenced by Greek thought, which was labelled 'Broad Church'. The Bible was understood in terms of the general education and progress of humankind, a process which continued into the present.

This ethos was adopted by many others, some of whom were increasingly aware of German historicism and Enlightenment thought, sometimes as mediated by the enigmatic Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834). Julius Hare (1795–1855), for instance, who had translated the German ancient historian Barthold Niebuhr and worked on Luther, befriended the Prussian diplomat-scholar Baron C. C. J. Bunsen (1791–1860), who published a popularisation of Heinrich Ewald's *History of Israel*. There was a bitter reaction from Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800–82), professor of Hebrew at Oxford, and other High Churchmen. Opposition to German theology was often accompanied by a more general anti-Germanism and anti-Protestantism, demonstrated earlier in the century by Hugh James Rose in Cambridge. In a collected work, *Essays and Reviews*, published in 1860, a number of scholars applied German critical methods, including Bunsen's, to Scripture, which provoked an outcry and legal case in the church. In his essay 'The Interpretation of Scripture', Benjamin Jowett (1817–93), Master of Balliol College, Oxford, notoriously claimed that the Bible should be read 'like any other Book'.[22] Similarly, Frederick Temple (1821–1902), who went on to become Archbishop of Canterbury, claimed that the critical study of the Bible 'imperatively demands freedom for its conditions. . . . If the conclusions are prescribed, the study is precluded.'[23]

At the same time, John W. Colenso (1814–83), first bishop of the colonial diocese of Natal in South Africa, had questioned the numerical accuracy and morality of the Pentateuch. From his missionary perspective, and with a trust

[21] Connop Thirlwall, translator's introduction to Friedrich Schleiermacher, *A Critical Essay on St Luke's Gospel* (London: John Taylor, 1825), p. ix.

[22] Benjamin Jowett, 'The Interpretation of Scripture', in *Essays and Reviews*, 10th edn. (London: Longmans, 1862), pp. 399–527 at p. 455.

[23] R. T. Davidson, *Life of A. C. Tait* (London: Macmillan, 1893), 2 vols., vol. II, p. 293.

in the universality of Christian truth, Colenso claimed that he 'dared not, as a servant of the God of Truth, urge my brother man to believe that, which I did not myself believe, which I knew to be untrue, as a matter-of-fact, historical narrative'.[24] Such views led the Bishop of Cape Town to depose him, as well as another lengthy legal case. These events led to a vigorous reaction from more orthodox writers. John William Burgon (1813–88), for instance, wrote: 'The Bible is none other than *the voice of Him that sitteth upon the Throne!* Every book of it – every chapter of it – every verse of it – every word of it – every syllable of it – (where are we to stop?) every *letter* of it.'[25] This approach was shared both by Evangelicals and High Churchmen. Pusey, for instance, maintained a highly conservative approach to the verbal inspiration of Scripture, which was shared by his biographer, H. P. Liddon (1829–90), professor of Scripture at Oxford. Other High Churchmen, however, including Charles Gore (1853–1932), gradually adopted a cautiously critical approach to biblical scholarship.

In Cambridge a group of scholars led by J. B. Lightfoot, B. F. Westcott (1825–1901) and F. J. A. Hort (1828–92), sometimes referred to as the Cambridge triumvirate (the first two of whom became successive bishops of Durham), inspired by classical scholarship, devoted themselves to meticulous textual work, producing a revised Greek text of the New Testament, which became the basis of the new Revised Version. The theological implications of such detailed textual work were regarded by some as overturning some of the more radical scholarship emanating from Germany, especially F. C. Baur's theories about the dating of the New Testament. Where Baur had seen the differences between the authors of the New Testament as evidence of a conflict in the early church that had been concealed by the (forged) letters of Ignatius, Westcott regarded diversity as proof of authenticity.[26] Similarly, Lightfoot opposed what he regarded as Baur's Hegelianism on the basis of what he regarded as authentic historical study. Unlike some of their German counterparts, the Cambridge school was only very modestly liberal, even if they were able to stress the need to understand the writings of the New Testament in their historical context. Westcott and Lightfoot remained thoroughly orthodox in their theology, regarding history and 'honest criticism' as simply confirming the truths of the Christian faith and the supremacy of Scripture.

By the turn of the twentieth century, however, things had moved on: the professionalisation of English theology had begun in earnest – an important

[24] J. W. Colenso, *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined* (London: Longmans, 1862), p. viii.

[25] J. W. Burgon, *Inspiration and Interpretation* (Oxford: Parker, 1861), p. 89.

[26] Thompson, *Cambridge Theology*, chap. 5; Stephen Neill, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861–1969* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), chap. 2.

New Testament seminar (a German invention) had been introduced into Oxford by William Sanday, who was well acquainted with German scholarship. This offered a forum for serious and far less guarded academic research, which led to a number of influential publications, including the 1912 collection, *Foundations*, edited by B. H. Streeter (1874–1937). Streeter's essay, which questioned the historical veracity of the resurrection, provoked a minor controversy. By 1914 English biblical scholarship had become both more critical and more professional, although for the most part it remained more cautious than its German counterpart.

The United States

In the United States the development of universities was deeply influenced by the import of the German model, and the significant numbers of Americans who studied in Germany. Scholars such as the Swiss-born Philip Schaff (1819–93), who had been educated in Germany, helped professionalise American biblical studies, establishing it outside its traditional home in conservative denominational institutions. By the end of the century theology was being reshaped by broader developments in university life. In Chicago, for instance, the new university, founded in 1892, was structured around the discipline of practical sociology. Its first president, William Rainey Harper (1856–1906), a noted Old Testament scholar, attributed to the university a consciously 'prophetic' role. Its purpose was to offer 'service to mankind wherever mankind is, whether within scholastic walls or without those walls and in the world at large'.[27] This quest for relevance meant that the new sociological university was to be freed from traditions 'embodying ideas that have been dead for decades' just as the church was to be liberated from 'dogmas of which the real meaning has been forgotten'.[28]

This practical approach was deeply influential in the Chicago Divinity School. The New Testament scholar Shailer Mathews, first dean of the School, sought to maintain a connection with organised church life: 'In the early days of Chicago we felt ourselves to be something more than observers or critics of conventional church life. We had a Cause, the extension of correct, and as we believed, inspiring views of the Bible. We could not be cloistered scholars; we were to serve a religious movement.'[29] The socio-historical method, which

[27] W. R. Harper, 'The University and Democracy', in *The Trend in Higher Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1905), pp. 27–8.
[28] Harper, cited in Richard J. Storr, *Harper's University: The Beginning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 64.
[29] Shailer Mathews, *New Faith for Old: An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1936), p. 72.

dominated the biblical scholarship of the early years of the School, sought to carry out sociological investigations of the biblical texts as products of their environment. The Chicago biblical scholars moved away from 'formulae and institutions' to 'attitudes and convictions, the needs, temptations and trials, the prayers and rites, in a word, the actual religious life of the ongoing and developing Christian group. . . . A study of the origin and purpose of our doctrines shows how patterns have originated and served actual needs of a group.'[30] Chicago theology was intimately connected with its social context, both in the past and in the present. At the same time, however, more conservative theologies were represented elsewhere in the United States, most importantly in Princeton, which were often in open conflict with the more liberal tradition under the influence of such figures as Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge and Benjamin Warfield.

Conclusion

What emerges from this selective discussion of the course of the study of the Bible in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is the picture of theology as a discipline which was struggling to adopt a scientific method, but which was always compromised by the historical nature of its subject matter and its traditional identity as sacred supernaturally grounded knowledge. While some theologians found more or less plausible solutions to these problems in religious experience or special knowledge, and others – in numerical terms, the vast majority – resisted any encroachments by the scientific method, theology as a whole rapidly declined in influence and relative size throughout the century. In 1830 Protestant theology students in Germany amounted to about a quarter of all matriculated students. This had fallen to less than 8 per cent by 1914. Given the dominance of the philosophy faculty, it is hardly surprising that there was a quest for scientific and philosophical credibility for theology, and particularly for biblical studies as its most historical discipline, throughout the nineteenth century. It took the First World War, and the resulting questioning of the credibility of all knowledge, to offer theology an alternative lifeline, which restored to it a foundation in divine revelation. Such a theological method, however, offered little hope for continued historical study of the Bible as a theological discipline, or even for the relevance of theology as part of universal human knowledge.

[30] Shailer Mathews, *The Faith of Modernism* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), pp. 58–9.

12

The use of the Bible in dialectical theology

TIMOTHY GORRINGE

Dialectical theology

The term 'dialectical theology' was applied to what was perceived to be a new movement in theology in 1922, and is widely used to refer to the theology associated with the journal *Zwischen den Zeiten* (henceforth *ZZ*), which ran between 1923 and 1933.[1] Early observers identified Karl Barth and Friedrich Gogarten as the leaders of the movement, along with Barth's friend Eduard Thurneysen, but Emil Brunner and Rudolf Bultmann were also important figures.[2] The journal's title was taken from an article by Gogarten which roundly castigated the earlier generation, revelled in Spengler, and proclaimed the need for a wholly new start based in God's Word.[3] In the journal itself there were a score or so of regular contributors, who included the Lutheran Hans Asmussen, the Old Testament scholar Wilhelm Vischer, Barth's brothers Heinrich and Peter, and many lesser known figures. Whilst Barth's two commentaries on Romans, and especially the second edition, were the dynamite of the movement, there is no doubt that it represented a broader theological and cultural shift to which people came independently, finding their voice in Barth's work. 'When I wrote the book, did I simply put into words what was everywhere in the air – especially in Germany after the War?' Barth asked in 1926, and though of course there was nothing simple about it, there

[1] *Zwischen den Zeiten* (henceforth *ZZ*), ed. G. Merz and C. Kaiser (Munich, 1923–33). Quarterly 1923 to 1924 and thereafter bi-monthly. The person who first gave the group the label is unknown. (See Karl Barth, 'Abschied', *ZZ* 11 (1933), pp. 536–44.)

[2] Bultmann was never really fully integrated, though in a paper in 1926 we find him speaking of 'we dialecticians' and defending dialectical theology against its detractors. See R. Bultmann 'The Question of Dialectical Theology', *ZZ* 4 (1926), pp. 40–59; R. Bultmann, 'On the Question of Christology', in *Faith and Understanding*, pp. 116–44. Cf. Bultmann's letter to Barth of 26 May 1928 in Bernd Jaspert (ed.), *Barth–Bultmann Letters 1922–66*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), p. 37.

[3] F. Gogarten, 'Between the Times', in Robinson (ed.), *Beginnings*, pp. 277–82.

is something in this suspicion, as Gogarten's culture critique shows.[4] 'Barth has a following', noted Paul Schempp sourly in 1928,

> because his theology corresponds better to the present intellectual climate than do other theologies, because the sacrifice of intellect is a pleasure for those who here have little to sacrifice, because paradox seems profound, because the critique of the morbid counts as an accomplishment for weaklings, because through him theology has become once again interesting, problematical, worth having, an asylum for doubters and believers and the whole crowd of religious stages in between.[5]

In this sense dialectical theology was, of course, part and parcel of the whole cultural pattern of the time, which pre-dated the war. It has to be understood as part of the same seismic shift which produced 'the moment of cubism' in 1907, Schoenberg's development of atonal music, the formulation of relativity, and Freud's researches in Vienna. Although the support of Barth's teachers for the war was undoubtedly crucial in sending him 'back to the Bible', dialectical theology was not just protest, but rather a specifically theological turn to modernity. Along with all the movements just mentioned it sought to go beneath the surface, to understand reality afresh. In its own quite independent way it was a form of *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

None of the group was especially wedded to the term 'dialectic', and it had frequently to be emphasised that Hegelian dialectic was not what was involved. Dialectical theology, argued Ludwig Schlaich in 1928, is fundamentally dialogical theology, a dialogue in which God speaks and human beings respond.[6] For Bultmann dialectical theology is concerned with 'a dialogue based on the presupposition that no individual assertion is itself true or has general validity, but that it achieves its meaning only in connection with a counter assertion on the basis of the relation of both assertions to an undefined middle'.[7] What dialectic means, said Thurneysen, exegeting the Johannine prologue in 1925, is the fact that we always have to speak two words: 'was' and 'is', 'Jesus' and 'Christ', human beings and God, in a circle around a middle.[8] 'To leave the place open where the decisive Word would be spoken is the meaning of dialectic in theology,' said Barth in the same year, doubtless spelling out this

[4] Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 21.
[5] P. Schempp, 'Marginal Glosses on Barthianism', in Robinson (ed.), *Beginnings*, pp. 191–200 at p. 193.
[6] L. Schlaich, 'The Word of God and our Service of the Word', *ZZ* 6 (1928), pp. 498–516 at p. 502.
[7] R. Bultmann, 'Dialectical Theology', in Robinson (ed.), *Beginnings*, pp. 257–76 at p. 257.
[8] E. Thurneysen, 'The Johannine Prologue', *ZZ* 3 (1925), pp. 12–37 at p. 15.

idea. Dialectic is simply the recognition that the text 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it' applies to theology every moment. Barth argued that the fact that theology operates after the Fall meant that 'the fragmentariness, the paradox, the continual need of radical completion, the essential inconclusiveness of all [theology's] assertions are not to be denied'. Revelation is not dialectical, but reflection and debate about revelation necessarily is. 'Then there is a stating of essentially incomplete ideas and propositions among which every answer is also again a question. All such statements together reach out beyond themselves towards the fulfilment in the inexpressible reality of the divine speaking.'[9] This is really the heart of the meaning of dialectic for Barth, and at this stage, at any rate, Bultmann agreed.[10]

Amongst the dialectical theology group it was only Barth who produced commentaries in this period, though Thurneyesen wrote on John, and Bultmann was, of course, centrally concerned with issues of biblical interpretation. In accordance with the convention noted above I shall concentrate on the movement from Barth's first Romans commentary in 1919 to the collapse of *ZZ* in 1933, though it is impossible to ignore Barth's 1916 paper 'The Strange New World within the Bible'. I shall try to highlight five major dimensions of the use of the Bible by Barth and the *ZZ* contributors.

The use of Scripture in dialectical theology

Famously, Barth wrote the two Romans commentaries in the study of his parsonage in the industrial village of Safenwil, where he served for twelve years. His theology emerged, he told a pastors' conference in 1922, as an attempt to address 'the specific *minister's* problem, the *sermon*. I sought to find my way between the problem of human life on the one hand and the content of the Bible on the other.'[11] It cannot be sufficiently emphasised that Barth and his fellow contributors *approached the Bible as the basis of the preached word*. Of the leading figures in dialectical theology only Bultmann had a primarily academic background. All the others spent long periods in the pastorate, and some of the contributors always remained pastors. Preaching was a leading part of the Reformed and Lutheran pastor's ministry – some argued, the main

[9] K. Barth, 'Church and Theology', in *Theology and Church*, pp. 286–306 at p. 300.

[10] Bruce McCormack has argued that Barth's theology was dialectical from 1915 onwards, though in somewhat different ways as his thought developed: see McCormack, *Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*. For Bultmann see his 'On the Question of Christology', pp. 121 and 123.

[11] K. Barth, 'The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching', in *Word*, pp. 97–135 at p. 100 (emphasis in original).

part. Sermons, some electrifying, were regularly included in *ZZ* and Barth and Thurneysen published a well-known collection in 1924. The sermon, wrote Barth in 1925, 'as the place at which the will of God will be done today is the place at which theology is geared into the Church'. Theology, of course, is not preaching but must, 'as exegesis, continually raise the fundamental question of the genuine prophetic and apostolic witness to the revelation given in the canonical sources'.[12] 'The sermon is always a real conversation', said Schlaich, 'a dialogue between two partners, between the questioning community on the one hand and their opposite number: scripture giving a response through the mouth of the preacher.'[13]

Sermons were given this importance because, as Barth said to his academic critics in 1921, he and his collaborators found in Scripture 'documents . . . which compel men to speak at whatever cost, because they find in them *that which urgently and finally concerns the very marrow of human civilization*'.[14] This conviction was the primary presupposition of the theology of the Word of God which is aired more or less continuously in the pages of *ZZ*. Other factors were involved in this theology, as we shall see, but the sense that the source of all reality, and therefore the source of all ethics, addresses human beings in the pages of Scripture is absolutely key. 'How can human utterance carry an irresistible and compelling meaning? How can it be capable of bearing witness?' asked Barth. Answer: because, through all ambiguity 'the living Truth in the centre, the reality of God, asserted *itself*'.[15] In the Bible it is not we who seek answers to the questions about our life, but God who questions and calls us. 'The expectancy brought to the situation by the congregation, intense as it may be, is in truth small and insignificant in comparison to that expectancy, as mute as the other but far more real, which comes from the side of the open Bible.'[16] The Word is strictly speaking a word, insisted Gogarten, and we know it is God's Word because it compels obedience.[17] 'The Word of God never comes (*austreten*) as a human word in a human monologue but always stands over against us', agreed Schlaich. 'Human beings can never speak this word as

[12] Barth, 'Church and Theology', p. 303. Bultmann's concern that Barth appeared not to engage with human questioning or to understand that the Word shaped human consciousness curiously overlooks the ecclesial focus of all Barth's exegesis. In Norbert Elias' terms, Barth expected Scripture to shape the structure of affect of the ecclesial community and thus to affect action. It was this ecclesial focus which made it impossible for Barth to become an existentialist.

[13] Schlaich, 'Word of God', p. 501.

[14] Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 9 (my emphasis).

[15] K. Barth, 'The Task of the Ministry', in *Word*, pp. 183–217 at p. 211.

[16] Barth, 'The Need of Christian Preaching', p. 122.

[17] F. Gogarten 'What Is God's Word?', *ZZ* 5 (1927), pp. 310–30 at pp. 311, 323.

their own word but hear it and obey it.'[18] 'Thirty years ago', said Barth looking back to the dialectical theology days,

> we launched a new movement whose aim was to reverse the current understanding of the Bible. The concern was the Word of God, God's gift and message to human beings. Our aim was to emancipate understanding, both of the Bible and of things in general, from the Egyptian bondage in which one philosophy after another had tried to take control and teach us what the Holy Spirit was allowed to say as the Word of God and of man in order to be open to understanding.[19]

One of the things which followed from this was an emphasis on what Barth later called the 'contingent contemporaneousness' of God's Word and therefore of Scripture. This was one of the things which infuriated the New Testament scholar Adolf Jülicher about Barth's *Romans*. His exegesis simply did not respect the proper historical distance between the first and the twentieth centuries, Lessing's 'foul wide gap'.[20] Jülicher also believed, of course, that Scripture spoke a vital word to us, but the process by which Barth moved constantly from Paul to the contemporary world seemed to him utterly unscholarly. Bultmann, too, ticked Barth off for this kind of move in his commentary on 1 Corinthians. Barth is misled, he writes, by comparing the Corinthian divisions as parallel to modern personality cults, instead of understanding that they were dealing with mystagogues and Gnostics.[21] Vischer was guilty of the same kind of thing in his Old Testament exegesis. Vischer had a thoroughly Christocentric reading of the Hebrew Bible in which Christ is 'never yesterday's Word, merely a historical truth, but always addressed to us today, the most recent announcement, in our moment, speaking to our particular situation, grounding and confirming (*aufheben*) our existence'.[22]

That Scripture addresses our central concerns is what Barth meant in insisting that the purpose of biblical interpretation was to get at *die Sache*. Famously, Barth wrote: 'The Word ought to be exposed in the words. Intelligent comment means that I am driven on till I stand with nothing before me but the enigma of the matter; till the document seems hardly to exist as a document; till I have almost forgotten that I am not its author.'[23] 'At bottom', wrote Schlaich,

[18] Schlaich, 'Word of God', p. 508.
[19] Barth, 'Rudolf Bultmann', p. 127.
[20] The main example of this was the translation of *nomos* as religion, and the reading of Paul's complex thoughts on the law (Torah) as concerning the dialectic of religion.
[21] R. Bultmann, Review of Barth's *Resurrection of the Dead* in *Faith and Understanding*, p. 69.
[22] W. Vischer, 'The Old Testament as God's Word', *ZZ* 5 (1927), pp. 378–95 at p. 382.
[23] Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 8.

> we are absolutely not interested in sentences, in statements which we hear as such, but in the thing itself (*die Sache*), the reality to which these sentences point, which these sentences open up or wish to make plain, because it is these things which the listeners wish to ask about, that is, because these things are often not yet or no longer seen, hidden or concealed.[24]

The only way in which someone can really preach the Word of God is because the Word is not a psychological but a '*sachlich*' question (i.e. a question relating to the living reality of God speaking).[25] If we look only for historical material that is all we shall find, wrote Barth in 1916. If we are open to it, however, we will find a strange new world, the world of God. The Bible is not centrally about ethics or religion but about what God has to say to us. 'The Holy Spirit establishes the righteousness of heaven in the midst of the unrighteousness of earth and will not stop nor stay until all that is dead has been brought to life and a new world has come into being. This is within the Bible.... For it we were baptized.'[26] What the Bible is interested in can never be captured in a word. It has only one theological interest, which is God himself. Barth called this the Bible's 'otherworldliness, its unhistoricalness, its antipathy to the idea of sacredness'.[27] What Barth is getting at here is the vivid sense of the reality of God which stamps the second commentary on Romans as it stamps almost no other twentieth-century theological document. Protestantism had lost the wonder of God, he argued, turning instead to the wonder of the world, the miracle of history and the inner life:

> The great misery of Protestantism began: doctrine, parted from its life-giving origin, hardened into Orthodoxy; Christian experience, confusing itself with this origin, took refuge in Pietism; truth no longer understood and no longer understandable, shrivelled into the moral and sentimental maxims of the Enlightenment; and finally even Christian experience was reduced in Schleiermacher and his followers, both left wing and the right, to the hypothesis of being the highest expression of a religious instinct common to all men.[28]

Opposed to all this was the absolute centrality of God. Church congregations come with their own life questions and seek an answer but the Bible brings its own new and tense expectancy. It brings an answer which demands

[24] Schlaich, 'Word of God', p. 500.
[25] Schlaich, 'Word of God', p. 510.
[26] K. Barth, 'The Strange New World within the Bible', in *Word*, pp. 28–50 at pp. 41, 43, 50.
[27] K. Barth, 'Biblical Questions, Insights and Vistas', in *Word*, pp. 51–96 at p. 73/4.
[28] K. Barth, 'The Doctrinal Task of the Reformed Churches', in *Word*, pp. 218–71 at p. 246.

questions![29] It is here that the difference from Bultmann opened up. For Bultmann a definitive interpretation was impossible because the interpretation of a text depends on the exegete's awareness of his own existence and its possibilities. He agreed with Barth that Scripture is not a source for what has been in the past. 'It is speaking of me, since it speaks of my existence; and I confront it, not to observe and confirm, but as truly questioning it, as willing to learn from it.'[30] As with all historical documents, comprehension 'depends on the fact that the content to be interpreted pertains to my own existence, that my existence is characterized by openness'.[31] Thirty years later Barth protested that 'the erection of this doctrine of prior understanding as the norm, which lies at the root of Bultmann's hermeneutics, would seem to be the death of all right and genuine understanding. For it appears to compete with the Holy Spirit and unduly to restrict his operation.'[32] Barth always insisted that biblical hermeneutics was not the application of general hermeneutics but the pattern and measure of all others, seeking to let oneself be questioned by the text as openly as possible.

The emphasis on the presence of God in Scripture is bound up with the priority of eschatology in the exegesis of dialectical theology. 'If Christianity be not altogether thoroughgoing eschatology, there remains in it no relationship to Christ', wrote Barth on Romans 8:25.[33] Reviewing a book by Paul Althaus on religious socialism, Barth notes the absence of a clear and forceful presentation of how far the Gospel has the power to criticise society. Althaus's fundamental problem is that he does not understand the eschatology of the New Testament. The removal of eschatology from ethics is what makes it harmless and makes us unable to have a genuine political sense, reducing everything to inner pietism.[34]

Bultmann shared with other dialectical theologians the emphasis on eschatology. For him faith is certainly defined eschatologically but, of course, he reads eschatology existentially. 'This *now* of being addressed at a specific time, this moment, is *the eschatological now* because in it is made the decision between life and death.' On the other hand, the eschatological now is bound to the Word made flesh. This fact divides all history into two aeons. For

[29] Barth, 'The Need of Christian Preaching', p. 116.
[30] R. Bultmann, 'The Significance of Dialectical Theology', in *Faith and Understanding*, pp. 145–64 at p. 155.
[31] Bultmann, 'The Significance of Dialectical Theology', p. 159.
[32] Barth, 'Rudolf Bultmann', p. 127.
[33] Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 314.
[34] K. Barth, 'Basic Problems of Christian Social Ethics', in Robinson (ed.), *Beginnings*, pp. 46–57.

John the parousia has already occurred.[35] Jesus is the eschatological Lord not because he will come again but because he has called the community into life as a new creation.[36]

The reading of Scripture in *ZZ*, whether of the Old or New Testaments, is consistently eschatological, and this conveyed the urgency and finality of the claim which meets us there. The question is what is meant by eschatology. Moltmann later charged that both Barth and Bultmann ended up with a transcendental eschatology.[37] For Bultmann, as we have seen, eschatology was about the call to decision in the kerygma. For Barth eschatology was the transcendental boundary of time and eternity. In his commentary on I Corinthians he could write: 'Of the real end of history it may be said at any time: the end is near!'[38] Both reduce eschatology to an 'epiphany of the eternal present', something Barth had already acknowledged in 1940. On the other hand, as is clear from his review of Althaus, Barth had understood in the 1920s that Christian hope brings the present under judgement. The self-reproach that he failed to engage in politics at this time stemmed from the fact that he was so focused on reforming the church's understanding of its task that, like many of his most radical contemporaries, he failed to see in what direction things were moving.

Acknowledging that Paul was a child of his age and spoke to his contemporaries, Barth also insisted, in the preface to his first commentary, that Paul also spoke as a prophet and apostle of the kingdom of God to people of all ages. 'The critical historical method of biblical research has its place', Barth went on; 'it points to a preparation for understanding that is never superfluous. But if I had to choose between it and the old doctrine of inspiration I would resolutely choose the latter … all my attention has been directed toward seeing through the historical into the spirit of the Bible, which is the eternal Spirit.'[39] This preface was a focus of particular scorn for professional New Testament critics such as Adolf Jülicher who described Barth as 'a bitter foe of historical criticism', and as a Marcionite. Reviewing the second edition he spoke of the 'arrogance of a spiritual enthusiast'. In our age, he remarked tartly, 'the interpretation of scripture has once again become the exclusive concern of

[35] R. Bultmann, 'The Eschatology of the Gospel of John', in *Faith and Understanding*, pp. 165–83 at p. 175.
[36] R. Bultmann, 'Church and Teaching in the New Testament', in *Faith and Understanding*, pp. 184–219 at p. 204.
[37] Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, pp. 37–42, 50–69.
[38] Barth, *Resurrection of the Dead*, p. 112.
[39] K. Barth, 'Foreword to the First Edition', in Robinson (ed.), *Beginnings*, pp. 61–2 at p. 61.

pneumatics and of the bearers of revelation'.[40] He was able to point to many *crux interpreti* in which Barth had either ridden roughshod over the scholarly discussion, or rather hastily gone with one over others, without proper discussion. There is very little apparatus, and very infrequent reference to the scholarly literature in all four of Barth's Pauline commentaries. Moreover, Barth takes each letter (Romans, 1 Corinthians and Philippians) as an entity and does not cross-refer to other Pauline letters. Not only Jülicher but also Bultmann wanted to know how this was possible. Schlatter complained that when the reader becomes both the Greek and the Jew, so that the real Greek and Jew have disappeared, we no longer hear Paul. Is Paul really speaking of Christendom in Romans 9–11? he asked ironically. Bultmann joined in this complaint. In the second Romans, he suggested, history is completely reinterpreted as myth.[41] He agreed that it was essential to critique words and phrases by the subject matter but insisted that this could not be done without proper historical criticism:

> One must measure by the subject matter to what extent in all the words and sentences of the text the subject matter has really found adequate expression, for what else can be meant by 'measuring'? In Barth, however, I find nothing of such measuring and of the radical criticism based on it. It is impossible to assume that everywhere in the Letter to the Romans the subject matter must have found adequate expression, unless one intends to establish a modern dogma of inspiration, and something like this seems to stand behind Barth's exegesis – to the detriment of the clarity of the subject matter itself.[42]

Barth cheerfully accepted an affinity with the old doctrine of inspiration. 'Is there any way of penetrating the heart of a document – of any document! – except on the assumption that its spirit will speak to our spirit through the actual written words?'[43]

Bultmann also felt that Barth was too conservative, by which he meant that he did not sufficiently critique Paul's position. To these accusations Barth responded that of course he recognised the need for historical criticism. 'There is no knowledge of the Bible as God's Word without concrete knowledge of its historical character, without the possibility of viewing it from a historical point

[40] A. Jülicher, 'A Modern Interpreter of Paul', in Robinson (ed.), *Beginnings*, pp. 72–81 at p. 77.
[41] R. Bultmann, 'Ethical and Mystical Religion in Primitive Christianity', in Robinson (ed.), *Beginnings*, pp. 221–35 at p. 230.
[42] R. Bultmann, review of Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, in Robinson (ed.), *Beginnings*, pp. 100–20 at p. 119.
[43] Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 18.

of view – in other words realizing that this knowledge is not self-evident.' To turn the Bible into an oracle was to deny the possibility of revelation because it removed the need for decision.[44] It followed that Barth, and his fellow dialectical theologians, had no fear of historical criticism. On the contrary, Barth considered it 'necessary and justified' and, so far as establishing what stood in the text, was happy to sit at the feet of the leading New Testament scholars. But, when all was done, Barth complained, what academic commentaries left us with were runes: the whole was unintelligible.

> Recent commentaries contain no more than a reconstruction of the text, a rendering of the Greek words and phrases by their precise equivalents, a number of additional notes in which archaeological and philological material is gathered together, and a more or less plausible arrangement of the subject matter in such a manner that it may be made historically and psychologically intelligible from the standpoint of pure pragmatism.[45]

By contrast, Barth insisted that interpretation must be concerned with the intrinsic subject matter. Being a biblicist, said Barth, simply meant being prejudiced in supposing the Bible to be a good book, and for people to take its conceptions at least as seriously as they took their own.[46]

Bultmann argued that Barth failed to acknowledge the existence of 'other spirits' speaking in Romans than the Spirit of Christ, but Barth gladly acknowledged the fact: 'there are in the epistle no words at all which are not the words of those "other spirits" which he calls Jewish, or Popular Christian or Hellenistic'.

> It seems to me impossible to set the Spirit of Christ – the veritable subject-matter of the Epistle – over against other spirits, in such a manner as to deal out praise to some passages, and to depreciate others. . . . Rather, it is for us to perceive and to make clear that the whole is placed under the KRISIS of the Spirit of Christ. The whole is litera, that is, voices of those other spirits. The problem is whether the whole must not be understood in relation to the true subject matter which is – The Spirit of Christ.[47]

This conviction guided the approach to historical criticism. On the other hand, Barth moved further from Bultmann's cheerful bonfire of historical knowledge, expressed in the famous remark that 'we now know almost nothing of

[44] K. Barth, 'The Word of God and the Word of Man in Christian Preaching', *ZZ* 3 (1925), pp. 215–45 at p. 226.
[45] Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 6.
[46] Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 12.
[47] Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 17.

the historical Jesus'.[48] This seemed to Barth to involve a prioritisation of the subjective dimension. 'That *Christ* is the kerygma is what the New Testament appears to say, not that Christ is the *kerygma*. Bultmann seems to be trying to reverse the New Testament.'[49] Barth's commentary on 1 Corinthians came out in the same year, and in it he denied that knowledge of the resurrection might be historical. Later, this was to be something on which he insisted.

There is a nice irony in Jülicher's description of Barth as a new Marcion, an epithet echoed by Harnack. Harnack, like so many liberal theologians, had no use for the Old Testament, as Vischer noted in *ZZ*. In opposition to Harnack, and with the whole dialectical theology movement, Barth insisted that 'the repudiation of the Old Testament as a canonical document signifies a narrowing of our understanding of the breadth, length, depth and height of the truth of Christ'.[50] Through the words of these old writings, said Vischer, God speaks his eternally new word to us, 'so that whoever wants to hear Christ must hear Moses, and whoever refuses to hear the word of Moses cannot hear Christ, and only the one who hears Christ truly understands what God gave Moses to say'.[51] The New Testament can only be understood in relation to the Old, argued Brunner in 1930. In his view the New Testament presupposed a Hebrew thought world, and the church's assimilation of the Greek thought world had made it more and more difficult to understand the New Testament properly. 'The Old Testament is through and through eschatological. It is eschatology which separates the biblical world from the world both of classical antiquity and modernity. The Old Testament is the beginning of the New. Over all is one God, one gospel, one revelation, one Word, one covenant. The revelation of God is reality only in its totality.'[52] The significance of this insistence in the darkening world of the 1930s, repeated vehemently over and over again in the pages of *ZZ*, hardly needs to be emphasised. From it came a new appreciation of Scripture as canon. That theology is church theology, and that the canon is that collection of documents which gives church its identity, not simply in a sociological sense, but as its very *raison d'être*, is implicit throughout the writings of dialectical theology. The unity of Scripture is provided by the Spirit of God, the Name of God and the Act of God, argued Fritz Horn in 1929.[53] In fact we only have Scripture in the community, the Body of Christ, where

[48] Bultmann, 'On the Question of Christology', p. 132; Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, p. 14.
[49] Barth, 'Rudolf Bultmann', p. 96.
[50] Vischer, 'The Old Testament as God's Word', p. 383.
[51] Vischer, 'The Old Testament as God's Word', p. 380.
[52] E. Brunner, 'The Significance of the Old Testament for our Faith', *ZZ* 8 (1930), pp. 30–48.
[53] F. Horn, 'Bible and Interpretation', *ZZ* 7 (1929), pp. 211–54.

Christ is the head. For this reason exegesis can never be a matter of the scholar in his lonely study but is fundamentally a matter of the community. There is no theory of scriptural exegesis but only a praxis – the praxis of the community seeking to be obedient to God's Word.[54] 'We cruised about in the waters of the third article of the creed since the beginning,' wrote Thurneysen to Barth in 1925. 'Only we cannot remain spiritualists with Kutter and Ragaz . . . but have to push on further to the point from which the Holy Spirit comes: to the church as the bearer with its doctrine and Scriptures.'[55] Out of this further journeying, of course, came the *Church Dogmatics*.

As Barth was writing his first *Romans*, the Luther renaissance led by Karl Holl was under way. Barth detested this approach to Luther but the theology of the Word, and the approach to Scripture, which developed in dialectical theology was fed by this new interest, especially mediated by the Lutheran Gogarten, who returned to it again and again. *ZZ* frequently carried portions of scriptural exegesis by Luther and Calvin, in one case at least translated by Barth. Dialectical theology learned, especially from Luther, of the passionate, living and active character of the Word, which became real for people through preaching. Barth affirmed the Reformation Scripture principle according to which truth was contained in the Word of God, identified with the Old and New Testaments, and every doctrine was measured against what was taken to be an unchangeable and impassable standard discoverable in the Scriptures.[56] The Reformers 'had the courage to allow so accidental, contingent, and human thing as the Bible to become a serious witness of the revelation of God, to allow a book which was in itself profane to become *Holy* Scripture'.[57] The remarks about the doctrine of inspiration already mentioned are consistent with this. That his use of Scripture was not naively neo-orthodox was, of course, due to a much more complex understanding of hermeneutics, which owed everything to an attempt to respond to the Enlightenment critique.

Dialectical theology came to an end in 1933 with ferocious attacks by Barth on Gogarten, for his dalliance with the German Christians, and on Brunner for his assertion of a 'point of contact' (published the following year). Bultmann was also dismayed to learn that Barth expected him, on the basis of his presuppositions, to side with the German Christians. In all he discerned not simply 'natural theology' but a return to the fleshpots of liberal theology which, as far as Barth was concerned, made some other criterion of dogmatic truth

[54] Horn, 'Bible and Interpretation', p. 234.
[55] Barth and Thurneysen, *Revolutionary Theology*, p. 218.
[56] Barth, 'Doctrinal Task', p. 240–41.
[57] Barth, 'Doctrinal Task', p. 245.

more fundamental than Scripture. The real consequence of the eleven years of *ZZ*, and of Barth's evolution since 1916, were the fifteen hundred pages of *Church Dogmatics* 1/1 and 1/2, certainly the most consistent attempt to think through the implications of speaking of Scripture as 'the Word of God' in the history of the church and issuing in the characteristic Barthian position that Scripture is a fully human word, and therefore fallible, on the one side, but a word through which God speaks to our present, on the other. The questions of Troeltsch, meanwhile, have returned with a vengeance, and it remains to be seen how, in a multicultural world committed to mutual respect and tolerance, the passionate advocacy of Scripture as the unique form of divine revelation will fare.

13

Existential(ist) interpretation of the New Testament

ROBERT MORGAN

In theology and biblical studies the German phrase *existentiale Interpretation* (of the mythological conceptuality of the New Testament) was and still is closely associated with the New Testament interpretation of Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976), and in particular his debt to Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). The phrase itself occurs surprisingly late in Bultmann's writings, starting with his hermeneutical manifesto of 1941, 'New Testament and Mythology'.[1] It was prominent in the discussion of Bultmann's theology in the 1950s[2] until, sparked in part by the Christological deficit perceived in *existentiale Interpretation*, the so-called new quest for the historical Jesus gave the discussion a fresh focus. The debate subsided around 1968 when social ethics and political engagement seemed to a new generation more important than hermeneutics, but Bultmann's theological interpretation of the New Testament remains a landmark in modern theology. As recent discussions of hermeneutics reappropriate the nineteenth-century German tradition and its briefly creative developments in the 1920s, Bultmann's attempt to make sense of Christian talk of God following the demise of classical metaphysics resonates with aspects of more recent cultural criticism.

In Germany the phrase refers specifically to Bultmann's synthesis of exegesis and philosophy in a hermeneutical theology which aimed to express the Christian gospel today in and through a historically and exegetically responsible interpretation of the New Testament. Even where this ideal is still maintained, Bultmann's proposal is generally now considered unsatisfactory on account of its narrow focus on human existence and the individual believer. More traditional theologians agree with Barth against Bultmann in wanting

[1] R. Bultmann, 'New Testament and Mythology', trans. R. H. Fuller in Bartsch (ed.), *Kerygma and Myth*, pp. 1–44. Schubert M. Ogden made a fresh translation in Bultmann, *'New Testament and Mythology'*, pp. 1–43.

[2] E.g. three articles by E. Fuchs entitled 'Was ist *existentiale* Interpretation?' from 1952 and 1959, in *Zum hermeneutischen Problem*, pp. 65–115.

to conserve more of the doctrinal substance of Christianity, and even some of his pupils, notably Bornkamm and Käsemann, insisted on the primacy of Christology and the importance of its narrative historical dimensions. More radical revisionists want a fuller account of human existence and our relationship to nature as well as society than Heidegger provided, calling at least for some expansion of Bultmann's model.

In Britain the phrase itself has not been much discussed,[3] but it became familiar through translations of Bultmann's essays and the continental discussion. *Existential* was initially translated 'existential'.[4] That gave Bultmann's technical phrase (which reflected Heidegger's ontological analysis of the formal structures of human existence) the more general meaning of 'having to do with human existence'. This inaccuracy created out of Bultmann's Heideggerian phrase a new English one which corresponded rather to Bultmann's earlier *existentiell bewegte Exegese*.[5] The English phrase is broader than *existentiale Interpretation*, but helped some who doubted that all theological statements are about human existence to identify the central point.

The translation of Bultmann's *existential* as 'existential' was perhaps an echo of English translations of Kierkegaard's *Existents-Forhold* as 'condition of existence, existential relation', but it was later changed by Ogden – rightly in view of Bultmann's clear distinction between *existential* (referring to the ontological structure of human being) and *existentiell* (a particular act of proclamation or decision: 'ontic' in contrast to 'ontological'). The earlier translation corresponds to the 1962 translation of Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927) where *existenzial* is rendered 'existential' and *existenziell* by 'existentiell', but English readers who did not have this distinction in mind took 'existential' in the usual general sense. This simplification was not seriously misleading

[3] The best non-German exposition of existential(ist) interpretation (plus a Roman Catholic critique) is perhaps Marlé, *Bultmann et l'interprétation du Nouveau Testament*, responded to at length by Bultmann in *TLZ* 82 (1957), pp. 241–50 (=Bultmann, *Glaube und Verstehen*, vol. III, pp. 178–89) and discussed by G. Bornkamm in *ThR* 29 (1963), pp. 33–141 (=Bornkamm, *Geschichte und Glaube*, pp. 173–275, esp. pp. 241–5). Among more recent German treatments see Stegemann, *Der Denkweg Rudolf Bultmanns* and Lührmann, *An Itinerary for New Testament Study*, pp. 71–86.

[4] E.g. J. C. G. Greig in Bultmann, *Essays Philosophical and Theological*, pp. 258–61 (seven times). Altered by Ogden in Bultmann, *'New Testament and Mythology'*, pp. 87–90. See also Bartsch (ed.), *Kerygma and Myth*, p. 10, altered by Ogden in Bultmann, *'New Testament and Mythology'*, p. 9. The earlier translation was adopted by Ogden in Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, pp. 92–110 and (Fontana edn.) 107–29, for an article from 1930.

[5] In R. Bultmann, 'The Problem of a Theological Exegesis of the New Testament' (1925); English translation in Robinson (ed.), *Beginnings*, pp. 236–56, translated on p. 250 as 'existentially inspired exegesis' and elucidated on p. 248 as 'exegesis which is motivated [also *bewegte*] by the question of existence'. This 'is to be found only in the living moment of its being practised' (p. 248).

because the distinction was not at issue. The terms are in any case related, and Bultmann himself insisted that 'the conceptuality for *existentiale Interpretation* is rooted in an *existentiellen* self-understanding'.[6] The slippage from the specific Heideggerian meaning of *existential* into the general 'existential' in English has itself (despite alternative translations) become part of the history of modern biblical interpretation and, however inaccurate, it points in the right direction.

The alternative current translation of *existential* as 'existentialist' (reserving 'existential' for Bultmann's *existentiell* to which it more nearly corresponds) was doubtless encouraged by the popularity in America of Tillich, who saw 'the existentialist point of view' in Plato, Augustine and Dante, and attached the label to Schelling and several other German philosophers.[7] This translation was attractive also to those English-speaking theologians who welcomed Continental philosophy as more hospitable to religion than analytic philosophy or empiricism, and since 'existentialism' could cover many modern German as well as French thinkers it was natural to speak of Bultmann's 'existentialist approach' to theology, especially if existentialism is defined as 'not a body of doctrines but a way of doing philosophy. It is the way that begins by interrogating existence, where by "existence" is understood the kind of being that belongs to man [*sic*] in his concrete living, acting and deciding.'[8]

Bultmann's theology is then 'existentialist' in the weak sense of starting from the human end, reflecting on human existence in terms of personal being. But Heidegger and Jaspers themselves resisted the term, and while the umbrella now covers a wide range of philosophers and literary figures from Kierkegaard to Sartre, to include Bultmann under it is perhaps misleading, despite his affinity with Kierkegaard. The English word corresponds to the German *Existentialismus*, first recorded in 1919,[9] but English usage depended mostly on the French *existentialisme*, coined by G. Marcel in the early 1940s with reference to Sartre and de Beauvoir, and accepted by them. Sartre drew on Heidegger, but in ways which were unwelcome to the great philosopher of Being. In the shadow of Sartre's atheistic nihilism calling Bultmann's biblical interpretation 'existentialist' risks obscuring his identity as a Christian theologian.

Rather than being translated 'existential' or 'existentialist', *existentiale Interpretation* would better be paraphrased 'anthropologically oriented

[6] Bultmann, *'New Testament and Mythology'*, pp. 125 f., restoring German (1952).
[7] E.g. Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, pp. 123–51.
[8] Macquarrie, *Twentieth-Century Religious Thought*, p. 351.
[9] See *OED* Supp. 1972. For a fuller discussion see Law, 'The Abiding Significance'.

theological interpretation which draws heavily on a philosophical analysis of human being'. Bultmann was not particularly committed to the word itself[10] and was willing to substitute 'anthropological' provided this philosophical anthropology was not confused with cultural or social anthropology or the natural sciences, i.e. 'objectifying thinking'.[11] His *existentiale* refers specifically to Heidegger's ontological analysis in *Being and Time* and his own use of this to articulate a theological understanding of Paul and John, and so communicate the Christian gospel. Heidegger's phenomenological description of inauthentic and authentic human existence clarified that, and so signalled the difference made by the non-objectifiable act of God in Christ actualised in the kerygma.

Bultmann had been encouraged to question religious texts about their understanding of human existence by Dilthey's philosophy of history, which spoke of their *Lebensäusserungen* (life-utterances), but his underlying motive was his Lutheran emphasis on anthropology and a conviction that theology speaks of God by speaking of human existence. All these ingredients were important for Bultmann in 1927, and some *existentiale Interpretation* of John and Paul followed, but without the phrase.[12] In 1934 Hans Jonas provided a further catalyst for their fusion. He interpreted Gnostic anthropology with the help of Heidegger's analysis, persuading Bultmann of its potential to make ancient worldviews intelligible in the modern world. This provides a bridge to his use of the phrase in the 1941 manifesto where a mode of theological interpretation of Pauline and Johannine texts points towards a reinterpretation of the whole structure of Christian doctrine from an anthropological point of view.

Barth saw in this a return to the anthropocentrism of nineteenth-century liberal theology.[13] As early as 1930[14] Bultmann was having to answer the charge of imposing an alien system on Christian theology by explaining how he uses these categories. It is true that as a theological interpreter Bultmann brought to the biblical texts a set of beliefs about God and the world, in particular about

[10] See Bultmann, *'New Testament and Mythology'*, p. 125 (1952): 'Naturally, nothing turns on the term *existentiale*; anyone who is able or willing to do so may find a better term.'

[11] Bultmann, *'New Testament and Mythology'*, p. 126.

[12] R. Bultmann, 'The Eschatology of the Gospel of John' (1928); English translation in *Faith and Understanding*, vol. 1, pp. 165–83. 'Paul' (1930); English translation in *Existence and Faith*, pp. 111–46 and (Fontana edn.), pp. 130–72.

[13] K. Barth, 'Rudolf Bultmann', p. 127. He had always had his doubts about Bultmann's position, as is clear from his correspondence and the preface to the 3rd edition of his *Romans*.

[14] R. Bultmann, 'The Historicity of Man and Faith', in *Existence and Faith*, 1960/61 edns. pp. 92–110, 1964 edn. pp. 107–29. Bultmann's German title 'Die Geschichtlichkeit des Daseins und der Glaube' contains two terms which are less obviously Heideggerian in the English translation, 'historicity of man' instead of 'historicality of human existence'.

human existence, which he had clarified with the help of philosophy, and he laid great stress on the importance of 'pre-understanding' (*Vorverständnis*) when interpreting texts. However, these beliefs do not come from Heidegger, let alone from 'existentialism'. From 1927 on he drew on Heidegger's conceptuality because this helped him to express what he already believed. He knew that Heidegger's analysis itself owed much to Paul and Luther, and also to Augustine, Kierkegaard and Herrmann, and he thought it both a true account of human existence, and true to what Paul and John think about human existence.

There is always a danger of philosophy being imposed on Christian belief when its terms are used to express this, but Bultmann used his Heideggerian distinction between *existential* and *existentiell* to distinguish between the philosophy he borrowed (a phenomenological description of the ontological structures of human existence) and his own acts of theological interpretation and proclamation, instances of the concrete acts of willing and deciding, which Heidegger called *existenziell*. He denied that his use of Heidegger's ontological analysis controlled his theology. It was only an instrument doing work that his theology needed: 'What is meant by "existentialist interpretation" (*existentiale Interpretation*) is a method of interpreting, a way of asking questions by which interpretation is guided; and there ought not to be a continual confusion of "existentialist" (*existentiale*) interpretation with an "existential" (*existentiellen*) interpretation.'[15]

Bultmann's commitment to an anthropological orientation of theology and also his historical and exegetical conclusion that Heidegger's analysis corresponded to what parts of the New Testament and Western theological tradition were saying about human existence precede his *existentiale Interpretation*. Like any interpretation, theological interpretation of the New Testament was always a risk or 'venture',[16] but its roots in Luther, Kant and Schleiermacher are deeper than his specific and limited use of the early Heidegger's *existenziale Interpretation* of human being (*Dasein*). Heidegger's quest for Being (*Sein*) itself was not shared by Bultmann, who was not an ontologist, but he thought that talk of God was bound up with talk of human existence, and that parts of *Being and Time* illuminated human existence. He also thought that the New Testament act of God in Jesus Christ, actualised in Christian proclamation, could change an individual's self-understanding. This act of God, or revelation

[15] Bultmann, *'New Testament and Mythology'*, p. 125 (1952).

[16] On the *Wagnis* of theological exegesis see Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, vol. I, pp. 86, 93 (1926), 280 (1933).

event, could therefore best be clarified by contrasting human existence before and under faith. Paul's anthropological and soteriological terms represent these two alternatives for human existence. Interpreting them with the help of Heidegger's analysis of inauthentic and authentic existence was not prejudiced by Heidegger not himself sharing Bultmann's Christian kerygmatic view of how the transition from one to the other was made possible. Bultmann followed Paul in holding that faith is 'the obedient hearing of the word of proclamation . . . obedience to a specific act of God that is proclaimed and realized in the word'.[17] This Lutheran kerygmatic theology fits an anthropologically oriented interpretation of Paul which hinges on the latter's anthropological and soteriological concepts. Interpreting these with some help from Heidegger does not obscure the pivotal role of the kerygma, or act of God in Christ actualised in Paul's or Luther's or Bultmann's Christian proclamation.

When in 1941 Bultmann's anthropologically oriented theological interpretation of Pauline and Johannine texts became more widely known as the basis of a new hermeneutical theology the resulting account of Christianity seemed to most Christians reductive. Interpreting theological statements exclusively in anthropological terms was surely one-sided. Reservations were expressed about the capacity of Heidegger's philosophical conceptuality to do justice to the corporate, historical and cosmological dimensions of the biblical texts. An approach which looked promising as apologetics seemed to mutilate dogmatics. By presenting his approach as a solution to the problem of what was no longer credible in Christian discourse Bultmann showed himself closer to his liberal teachers than to Barth or more conservative Lutherans. *Existentiale Interpretation* seemed to dissolve the doctrinal tradition, leaving philosophical descriptions of human and Christian existence, linked only by a transformative act of God which cannot be spoken of in any objective way.

Bultmann's Lutheran modernism recalls more of liberal Protestantism than Barth's dogmatics does, but to do justice to his *existentiale Interpretation* it is necessary to understand his partial agreement with Barth in criticising that older liberalism. Both theologians were deeply dissatisfied with how their predecessors and contemporaries spoke of God, but they soon came to see that they disagreed about whether Christian talk of God is to be clarified by analysing human existence. Whether Christology should proceed 'from below', speaking first of the human historical figure of Jesus, is a separate question. Bultmann agreed with Martin Kähler and with Karl Barth's breaking with liberal Protestantism over that, but on talk of God his anthropologically

[17] Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, p. 165 (1930).

oriented Lutheranism remained closer to the anthropologically oriented theology of Schleiermacher. The collapse of German idealist philosophical accounts of human existence in history required a drastic modification of this, but there remains a strong family resemblance.

As the Roman Catholic and Anglican examples of Karl Rahner and John Macquarrie make clear, an anthropological approach or orientation of theology need not lead to its reduction to anthropology, despite Barth's fears. Schleiermacher need not lead to Feuerbach, and the latter's reductive interpretation of Luther can be answered. Nevertheless, Bultmann's theology was open to the charge of underestimating the historical and cosmological aspects of Christian discourse long before the demythologising manifesto through which *existentiale Interpretation* of the mythological language of the New Testament found a place in the history of twentieth-century theology. This use of Heidegger's philosophy did not cost Bultmann his identity as a Christian theologian. That depended on his subject matter remaining the act of God in Christ. However, his use of Heidegger depended on a prior belief about that subject matter: that talk of God 'is possible only as talk about ourselves'.[18]

The Reformation antecedents of this conviction are evident from the outset of Bultmann's association with Barth and Gogarten in the dialectical theology of the 1920s. He had long been critical of his teachers' talking of God by appeal to the historical Jesus,[19] and he had sympathised with Gogarten's *Religion Weiter* (1917) and 'The Crisis of our Culture' (1920).[20] He was always theologically closer to the Lutheran Gogarten (a former pupil of Troeltsch) than to Barth, and he remained much closer than Barth to the 'existence theology' of their Marburg teacher Wilhelm Herrmann (1846–1922). He had not been impressed by the first edition of Barth's *Romans* (1919), but his mostly favourable 1922 review of the second edition[21] was followed by an essay on 'Liberal theology and the latest theological movement' (1924).[22] This contains two glosses on the statement of Aquinas and others that 'the subject (or object: *Gegenstand*) of theology is *God*'. Bultmann begins by echoing Barth's polemical antithesis: 'and the charge against liberal theology is that it has dealt not with God but with man' (correcting Funk's translation).[23] The essay ends,

[18] R. Bultmann, 'What Does it Mean to Speak of God?' (1925); English translation in *Faith and Understanding*, pp. 53–65 at p. 61.
[19] Cf. M. Evang, *Rudolf Bultmann in seiner Frühzeit* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988).
[20] F. Gogarten, 'The Crisis of our Culture', in Robinson (ed.), *Beginnings*, pp. 205–35.
[21] R. Bultmann, review of Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, in Robinson (ed.), *Beginnings*, pp. 100–25.
[22] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, pp. 28–52.
[23] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, p. 29.

however, echoing Luther: 'Theology speaks of (*von*) God because it speaks of man [*sic*] as he stands before God. That is, theology speaks out of faith.'[24] In the following year he saw talk of God coinciding with 'talk of ourselves'.[25]

Both these essays show Bultmann's concern to speak of God following the collapse of philosophical and ethical idealism[26] and the failure of historical Jesus research to reconstruct the personality of Jesus. He surprisingly compared Barth's *Romans* with Schleiermacher's *Speeches (On Religion)* and Otto on *The Idea of the Holy*. All three theologians (he said) wanted to make room for religion in its uniqueness and absoluteness.[27] He could welcome Barth's change of terminology from Herrmann's theological use of modernity's word 'religion' to the Reformation and Pauline word 'faith' without changing his own basic belief that talk of God 'is possible only as talk of ourselves'. Provided that 'faith' is not misunderstood in psychological terms this avoided the problem that 'religion' was tending (under the influence of historicism) to refer to the worldly phenomenon investigated by 'science', rather than to the believer's existential attitude, as intended by Schleiermacher and Herrmann.

As a New Testament theologian Bultmann could not sit lightly to historical criticism as Barth could, but Barth's theological interpretation of Paul's Epistle to the Romans (very different from a historical reconstruction of Paul's religion) stands behind his crucial shift from doing theology by *historical reconstruction* of early Christian religion prompting modern theological reflection on the present situation[28] to a historically schooled theological interpretation of *texts*. As he explained some thirty years later, 'the writings of the New Testament can be interrogated as the "sources" which the historian interprets in order to reconstruct a picture of primitive Christianity as a phenomenon of the historical past, or the reconstruction stands in the service of the interpretation of the New Testament writings under the presupposition that they have something to say to the present'.[29] After 1921 most of his writing fell into the latter category, including the *existentiale Interpretation* by which he tried to bring out the theological meaning of New Testament texts by interpreting their mythological language in a more appropriate way.

[24] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, p. 52.
[25] See n.18. Also the conclusion of 'The Problem of a Theological Exegesis': 'genuine historical exegesis . . . coincides with theological exegesis' (p. 256).
[26] See also R. Bultmann, 'The Question of Natural Revelation' (1941); English translation in *Essays Philosophical and Theological*, pp. 90–118.
[27] English translation in Robinson (ed.), *Beginnings*, p. 100.
[28] E.g. R. Bultmann, 'Ethical and Mystical Religion in Primitive Christianity' (1920), in Robinson (ed.), *Beginnings*, pp. 221–35.
[29] Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. II, p. 251.

This new emphasis on theological interrogation and interpretation of texts (following his engagement with Barth's second edition) signals Bultmann's turn to a hermeneutical theology based mainly on the theological interpretation of Paul's epistles and the Johannine Gospel and epistles. He strongly agreed with Barth 'that the philological historical explanation of the text is a necessary side of exegesis' and also 'that a text can be explained only when one has an inner relationship to the matter (*Sache*) with which the text deals'.[30] Like Barth he too wanted to speak *with* the text. However, he thought Barth did violence to the text and (even more significantly) he insisted on a readiness to criticise what the text says in the light of what it truly intends (*Sachkritik*).

When Barth at once responded in his preface to his third edition (dated July 1922), that qualification became a subject of their ongoing disagreement. It was also the kernel of Bultmann's later demythologising and *existentiale Interpretation*. But it is a reservation attached to a more fundamental agreement about their theological aim to interpret Scripture:

> And I agree also when Barth formulates the high point of exegetical understanding as follows: 'As one who would understand, I must press forward to the point where insofar as possible I confront the riddle of the *subject-matter* (*Sache*) and no longer merely the riddle of the *document* as such, where I can almost forget that I am not the author, where I have almost understood him so well that I let him speak in my name, and can myself speak in his name.' In other words, a paraphrase, truly the greatest art of exegesis, is the best commentary.[31]

Whether or not 'paraphrase' gives a full account of what Barth and Bultmann intend, Bultmann's agreement is qualified by disagreements about Christology[32] and about the interpreter's relationship to the text (the legitimacy of *Sachkritik*[33]) which would continue to divide twentieth-century theology. They agree in wanting to interpret the text in the light of its subject matter (*Sache*), and they agree that the subject matter was the gospel, the saving act of God in Christ, to which the New Testament bears witness. However, the gulf between Barth's Christological and Bultmann's anthropological emphasis in defining the gospel subject matter would soon become apparent, and Bultmann's readiness to criticise the text theologically would always seem to Barth dangerously subjective.

[30] Bultmann, review of Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 118.
[31] Bultmann, review of Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 118 f.
[32] Bultmann, review of Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 115–18.
[33] Bultmann, review of Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 118–20.

Instead of leading New Testament theology into the literary framework suggested by 'interpretation of texts to communicate their theological subject-matter', Bultmann chose to remain within the historical paradigm that governed biblical scholarship, and to achieve his theological aims by shifting from the positivistic historiography of his predecessors into the more existentially oriented historiography advocated by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911). Dilthey's correspondence with Paul Yorck was published in 1923 and could be dovetailed with the existential theology that Bultmann had learned from Herrmann. It also anticipated part of Heidegger's analysis of human existence.

Bultmann would never abandon the technical historical scholarship that he had learned in the history of religion school and taken further in *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1921), but he denied that it clarified what history was really about, namely human existence. The study of history should not aim merely to reconstruct what had happened in the past, but should disclose the possibilities for human existence in the present. Positivistic historiography had attempted to be 'scientific' by imitating so far as possible the natural sciences, but Dilthey had distinguished these from the human and cultural sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) which included history, and suggested that as *Lebensäusserungen* (utterances of life) certain texts from the past could be interrogated about their understanding of human existence.

Bultmann starts talking intensively about 'faith' in his 1922 review of Barth[34] and his 1924 essay on the 'latest theological movement',[35] and about 'existence' in his 1925 essays on Godtalk[36] and on theological exegesis.[37] The latter appeals to Dilthey as it explains how history is to be understood in an existential (*existentiell*) way as *encounter*:

> If we again take up the question of where the meaning of the text lies and of its accessibility for the exegete, then it is clear that we are asking about the possibilities for our existence which arise from our encounter with history. . . . We attempt to understand the way in which the text shows its writer's interpretation of his concept of his existence as the true or authentic possibility of existing. With this question we would seek disclosure about our own existential (*existentielle*) possibility and thereby confront the text in much the same way as we confront people with whom we stand in a living relationship, where we first find any existence, namely in the relations of I and Thou. . . . And just as these relations (in which our actual existence is played out) are for

[34] Bultmann, review of Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*.
[35] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, pp. 28–52.
[36] Bultmann, 'What Does it Mean to Speak of God?', p. 61.
[37] Bultmann, 'The Problem of a Theological Exegesis of the New Testament'.

> us temporal events, events characterized by decision, so then the existential encounter with history takes place in temporal moments which demand our decision.[38]

Here and the following year in the introduction to *Jesus* (translated as *Jesus and the Word*) Bultmann goes beyond the usual view of history as reconstructing a historical development, not because this is impossible or illegitimate, but because he thinks it fails at the philosophical (and theological) level.[39] It surveys the possibilities of human existence as though it has them at its disposal, whereas Bultmann thinks these can be grasped only in the moment of responding to a particular challenge. The remarkable power of *Jesus and the Word* (German 1926) owes little to Bultmann's earlier judgements about the historicity of some of the Gospel material. He aims rather to 'lead the reader . . . to a highly personal *encounter* with history' by providing 'information about *my* encounter with history'.[40] Both exegesis and history are understood as disclosing possibilities for being human, not merely establishing what the text says, or reconstructing the historical development for which it is a source. Theologians and philosophers of personal being or existence are concerned with how as humans we can *live* ('exist' is much more than bare existence in this context).

In the 1925 discussion of 'theological exegesis' Bultmann speaks of 'temporality' (*Zeitlichkeit*) and 'real temporal happenings', as he would shortly speak with Heidegger of *Geschichtlichkeit*.[41] This key term means more than the English 'historicity' or 'historicality'. It refers to the ontological structures of human being to which Bultmann thinks only Dilthey's philosophical account of history writing and Heidegger's account of human existence do justice. The human experience of time depends on making existential decisions, not on surveying the total span of history in a timeless way as idealism does.

This theory of history and human existence allows Bultmann to explain how the words of a religious, literary or philosophical text confront the reader in a particular moment. It justifies an *existentiale Interpretation* of some biblical

[38] Bultmann, 'The Problem of a Theological Exegesis of the New Testament', p. 248, modified. See also later 'The Problem of Hermeneutics' (1950) in Bultmann, *'New Testament and Mythology'*, pp. 69–93. Also R. Bultmann, *History and Eschatology*: *The Presence of Eternity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press and New York: Harper & Bros., 1957).

[39] Cf. his account of 'The Significance of "Dialectical Theology" for the Scientific Study of the New Testament' (1928); English translation in *Faith and Understanding*, pp. 145–64, esp. p. 163: 'Insight into the dialectic of human existence, that is into the historical nature of humans and human statements opens up to research a new road, in that the old historical method is not replaced but deepened' (translation altered).

[40] Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, p. 13.

[41] Bultmann, 'The Problem of a Theological Exegesis of the New Testament'.

texts, and this dovetails with his Lutheran theology of the preached Word of God.

Eighty years later some secular historians also are explicit about the existential dimensions of their craft. The rediscovery of narrative since around 1980 has both vindicated Bultmann's emphasis on the historian's (and historical theologian's) interpretation of *texts* and has also identified as a major weakness in his *existentiale Interpretation* its lack of interest in the biblical narrative. Correcting that would affect his understanding of both history and eschatology, but could still respect the intention of *existentiale Interpretation* to be a form of *theological* interpretation. Its alternative development by some of Bultmann's critics and followers, notably Fritz Buri and Herbert Braun, weakened its claim to be theological.

Bultmann's legacy can be developed today in theological or non-theological ways. In the 1940s and 1950s most of the discussion was less relaxed. As a senior professor active in the Confessing Church that was resisting the 'German Christianity' of the Nazis, Bultmann saw that in the 1920s reaction against liberalism (to which he had contributed), and now in a confessing church influenced by Barth, 'theology and the church have run the risk of uncritically repristinating New Testament mythology, thereby making the kerygma unintelligible for the present'.[42] He argued that *existentiale Interpretation* of the New Testament's mythological conceptuality was necessary if the kerygma was to be heard 'as the message of God's decisive act in Christ'.[43] In a world which no longer presupposed a mythological worldview much of the biblical language was a barrier to correct understanding.

By focusing on 'myth' and by his provocative slogan 'demythologising' Bultmann took the ensuing debate away from the discussion of Heidegger's conceptuality, and back to the larger liberal agenda of restating Christianity in the modern world. But sharing Barth's view that liberal Protestantism had eliminated the kerygma, he wanted to preserve this by an appropriate interpretation of the texts. The mythological language would have to be eliminated, but the criterion should be not modern thought but the gospel itself, as it had been in his advocacy of *Sachkritik* back in the 1920s.

But where could the gospel be found, if it could not be identified with the words of Scripture or dug out by historical reconstructions of Jesus? Because in Bultmann's view the kerygma could not be objectified, the place to look was in the New Testament's understanding of human existence before and after

[42] Bultmann, *'New Testament and Mythology'*, p. 11.
[43] Bultmann, 'New Testament and Mythology', p. 12.

that ineffable event. The real content of the New Testament proclamation is the salvation event, but this is expressed in mythological language which inappropriately describes the other-worldly in this-worldly terms. What it intends can be grasped only by attending to how the New Testament, or rather Paul and John, understand human existence before and after the Gospel proclamation is appropriated by faith. To clarify this, theology needs a philosophically clarified conceptuality such as that provided by the early Heidegger.

Like most modern believers Bultmann thought that 'many words in the New Testament directly speak to us today, while yet others are unintelligible and remain closed to us'.[44] It was Scripture's account of human existence as summoned to decision and knowing guilt, anxiety and finitude which made sense to him, whereas the idea that human beings are cosmically determined and subject to fate did not. It was not only ancient cosmology that he discounted, and not only the peripheral legends of the virgin birth and ascension, but the mythological language in which the Christ event or salvation occurrence itself is expressed: the pre-existence of Christ, the atonement, the resurrection, futurist eschatology. Their real meaning as talk of God in Christ saving humans must be retrieved from language which cannot today be understood literally. There was no room for half-measures or concealing from oneself or one's congregation the extent of what is being eliminated in the necessary new non-literal interpretation of ancient religious language.

This approach yielded powerful interpretations of Pauline and Johannine theology. Both these biblical writers were, in Bultmann's opinion, theologians because they realised that talk of God was at the same time talk of human existence. John 'demythologised' the language of his tradition, assigning the mythological futurist eschatology to the existential decisions of those who hear the Christian proclamation today. Paul's anthropological and soteriological concepts include talk of God and Christ as they describe unredeemed and redeemed humanity and so fit Bultmann's grid. The residue which does not fit can be critically removed as allegedly out of tune with Paul's central thrust.

Most New Testament scholars have responded that eliminating futurist eschatology and saying rather little about the church and sacraments and Israel and salvation history distorts Paul's theology, and that minimising the importance of the historical narrative misreads John. Other parts of the New Testament are less amenable to this mode of theological interpretation, and this is a problem if Scripture as a whole is the norm of Christianity.

[44] Bultmann, *'New Testament and Mythology'*, p. 11.

Historical exegetes have rightly argued that as well as reading Paul and John in a one-sided way and ignoring other important witnesses Bultmann's *existentiale* theological interpretation goes beyond the limits of normal historically oriented New Testament theology in its effort to communicate the gospel in the modern world. The challenge posed is whether New Testament scholars are right to address the hermeneutical problem of speaking of God today, or whether they should keep this theological exploration separate from their historical and exegetical work. Bultmann, however, was a modern theologian, standing in a German Lutheran tradition which expected New Testament scholarship to serve the church more directly than some other historians think appropriate, by teaching future clergy how to interpret the New Testament in their preaching. Whatever its weaknesses, his synthesis sets a standard for a truly theological New Testament theology, and few doubt that even its mistakes have hugely advanced the critical discussion of these texts.

The more important criticisms of Bultmann's proposal came from the modern theological side. Many objected to Bultmann's theology in much the same way that they had resisted the older liberal theology. Granted that Bultmann's account of the kerygma allowed him to speak of the saving act of God in Christ as the liberal life of Jesus theology did not, and that he was therefore more orthodox than his radical critics (who thought his 'act of God' in the 'kerygma' an unfortunate residue of mythology), Bultmann nevertheless said less about Jesus, God and the salvation of the created world than most theologians. Granted that myth must not be mistaken for science or history, many have doubted that Christianity can dispense with this language. Some dimensions of religion cannot be adequately described or evoked in philosophical terms.

In disputing Bultmann's suggestion that the resurrection is merely the expression of the significance of the cross, some critics agree with him about the character of the traditions but insist that this foundational event speaks of the future of the material world and history, not simply the present self-understanding of Christians. Even theologians most sympathetic to his anthropological orientation of theology have wanted to say more about God and the world than Bultmann's neo-Kantian rejection of 'objectifying' language could allow.

Whatever misunderstandings have attended the reception of Bultmann's hermeneutical theology or *existentiale Interpretation*, his critics have insisted that he says less than the doctrinal tradition intends. For example, an early Anglican contributor to the demythologising debate, Austin Farrer, could see the value of existentialism

> for opening the eyes of materialists to inward things. It shows them how to talk in a tolerably hard and exact way about personal interaction, about freedom, responsibility, and decision. It reveals courage and nobility, but also agony and insufficiency: darkness from which a spiritual salvation (if there were one) might deliver us, and some scattered gleams of the glory into which it might, in delivering, translate us. In a word, it reveals *man* in something like the sense the word bears for Christian thought. And so it may prepare the way for the discovery of a sense of need, which is the preliminary to faith. Nor need its contribution end when a man has come to believe. It can still set before his eyes the realm of personal existence to which faith is normally relevant and in which the presence and act of God can normally be looked for by the believer.[45]

However, Farrer was not himself about to embrace existentialism and while it might open and enlarge vision he adds that

> when it is used to set up arbitrary limits to the scope of our thought we have every reason to suspect and hate(!) it: when, for example, it fixes the narrow model of personal encounter on the whole form of our relation with our Creator, or when it sets natural fact in such antithesis to personal existence that it is handed over wholly to the inescapable rule of physical regularity.[46]

Farrer's criticism stems from a vision of God and the world that is deeply at odds with Bultmann's neo-Kantian modernism and with the anthropological orientation of his Lutheranism. Karl Barth also identified the Lutheranism which he shared with Melanchthon, Kierkegaard and Herrmann as the source of an anthropological one-sidedness which could with some justification appeal to Paul, but narrowed the scope of Scripture.[47] Bultmann himself claimed in 1952 that demythologising is the consistent application to the sphere of knowledge and thought of the Pauline and Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith alone without the works of the law. It destroys the false security of objective knowledge as a form of works. Faith in God 'cannot ask for any proof of the truth of the word that addresses them. For the ground and the object of faith are identical.'[48]

Depending exclusively on the word of God proclaimed still requires the understanding that faith seeks, but precludes basing resurrection belief on historical arguments. The word of God can be proclaimed only in human words, but the traditional language is affected by new understandings of nature

[45] Bartsch (ed.), *Kerygma and Myth*, vol. 1, p. 221.
[46] Bartsch (ed.), *Kerygma and Myth*, vol. 1, pp. 221 f.
[47] Barth, 'Rudolf Bultmann', pp. 121–4.
[48] Barth, 'Rudolf Bultmann'.

and history, and what is now perceived as 'mythological' needs decoding to express its real meaning. Bultmann's *existentiale Interpretation* suggested how to speak of God in the twentieth century. By speaking of human existence it set the stage for the kerygma which would change some people's understanding of themselves. But if God is the reality that determines everything, not only 'our existence',[49] it says less than Christian talk of God intends. Talk of God includes talk of our own existence, but they are not interchangeable. In that case *existentiale Interpretation* cannot provide a complete programme for Christian theology or theological interpretation of Scripture.

Whether what Christian theology must say even about human existence can be fitted into the categories of Heidegger's early philosophy is also questionable. Paul had more to say about physical embodiment, the span of history and corporate life in Christ than Bultmann's theology could accommodate.[50] But Bultmann's philosophical map might be enlarged and still allow an anthropologically oriented theological interpretation which draws heavily on a philosophical anthropology. It could make room for a theology of history which does not reduce the span of history to *Geschichtlichkeit* or the temporal future to openness to the future. Because history is the *human* story all this could be incorporated into a new *existentiale Interpretation*. Because humans are part of nature the philosophical anthropology it might borrow would engage the natural as well as the social sciences. An anthropologically oriented theology can say as much about the starry heavens above as the moral law within. The awesome wonder with which humans consider the works of God's hands evokes humble adoration of God who is greater, and gratitude for our participation in nature as well as in the historical experience celebrated by Bultmann. Christian faith in God in Christ includes an understanding of ourselves, and Bultmann believes (as many do not) that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves. Theological anthropology remains a central task of Christian reflection, and it is too important to be left where it was in the 1920s. But that creative period in twentieth-century theology had deep roots in the Western tradition, and it still has much to teach anyone willing to relearn the fragility of the human condition.

[49] Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, pp. 56–8.

[50] Bultmann allowed that his philosophical analysis 'remains subject to correction' through critical discussion: see *'New Testament and Mythology'*, pp. 108–9 (1952).

14

Liberationist readings of the Bible

CHRISTOPHER ROWLAND

Liberationist hermeneutics is primarily a way of reading which is the product of late twentieth-century political theology. It is rooted in the commitments of individuals and churches to a gospel which is understood to be as much about the political as the spiritual. It is inspired by ways of reading determined by action and commitment to the betterment of poor people's lives rather than the detached reflection of the study or the sanctuary. Whatever the contribution from sympathetic academics in terms of both method and content, the actual outworking of the reading was rarely prescribed or controlled by those intellectuals who were involved.

What is distinctive about this way of reading is not its political dimension, which can be replicated at least at a theoretical level in other contemporary ways of reading the Bible, but the central place given to the involvement and commitment within the work for change as the necessary context for the understanding of the Bible. The *content* of liberation theology is part of the history of political theology. It is best known from the writings of a number of theologians whose work with the poor in late twentieth-century Latin America (in particular) led them to articulate an approach to theology and biblical interpretation in which the political and social import of biblical passages came to the fore. It was pioneered in Latin America and associated with the work of Gustavo Gutiérrez but has many affinities in its method, with feminist theology, Black theology and various kinds of contextual theology. It is much less critical in its use of the Bible than feminist theology. It is characterised by an embracing of experience broadly defined as the necessary context and basis for that which constitutes the theological. In a famous statement of the driving force behind liberation theology Gustavo Gutiérrez wrote: 'The question here [in Latin America] will not be how to speak of God in a world come of age, but rather how to proclaim God as Father in a world that is inhumane. What can it mean to tell a non-person that he or she is God's child?'[1]

[1] Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor*, p. 57.

Liberation theology has emerged within the wider context of catholic social teaching and, in particular, the significant development of Roman Catholic theology based on the Second Vatican Council, and the encyclicals associated with it. The decisions taken by the Latin American bishops at their epoch-making meeting at Medellín, reaffirmed at Puebla and Santo Domingo, with the explicit commitment to take a 'preferential option for the poor' reaffirmed at Santo Domingo, have offered a foundation for those Christians committed to the betterment of the poor and therefore to seeing their task as an integral part of the church's task of evangelisation.[2]

Liberation theology is known from scholarly books and articles but has its roots in the Basic Christian Communities (the Comunidades Eclesiales de base (CEBs)). A constant refrain of all the different liberationist approaches is that the CEBs have been the dynamo for the emergence of liberation theology's approach to the Bible, the particular means whereby the divine perspective on human existence is offered. They are the 'little ones' who are vouchsafed a peculiar insight into the identity of the divine wisdom (Matt. 11:25–7). Among these grassroots groups the Bible has become a tool for the exploration of pressing contemporary issues relevant to the community and offers a language so that the voice of the voiceless may be heard. In the CEBs there is an immediacy in the way in which the text is used because resonances are found with the experience set out in the stories of biblical characters which seems remote from the world of most people in the more affluent Europe and North America. The Bible offers a means by which the present difficulties can be shown to be surmountable in the life of faith and community commitment. To enable the poor to read the Bible has involved programmes of education, so that the Bible can be a resource for thousands who cannot read. In such programmes full recognition is taken of the value of the experience of ordinary life. So, the wisdom of the artisan as well as the scholar is included in the interpretation of the biblical text. It echoes the sentiments of earlier forms of grassroots exegesis. Thus Gerrard Winstanley suggested that putting the Bible in the hands of ordinary people reflects the Scriptures themselves which were written 'by the experimental hand of shepherds, husbandmen, fishermen and such inferior men of the world'.[3]

The community setting means an avoidance of a narrowly individualist 'religious' reading. As we have seen, the experience of poverty and oppression (often termed 'life' or 'reality') is as important a text as the text of Scripture

[2] Hennelly, *Liberation Theology*.
[3] Winstanley, 'Fire in the Bush', in *Complete Works*, vol. II, p. 200.

itself. It represents another text to be studied alongside that contained between the covers of the Bible. God's word is to be found in the dialectic between the literary memory of the people of God in the Bible and the continuing story to be discerned in the contemporary world, particularly among those people with whom God has chosen to be identified. This twofold aspect is well brought out by Carlos Mesters:

> The emphasis is not placed on the text's meaning in itself but rather on the meaning the text has for the people reading it. At the start the people tend to draw any and every sort of meaning, however well or ill founded, from the text. Only gradually, as they proceed on their course in life, do they begin to develop an interest in the historical import and intrinsic meaning of the text. It is at this point that they can benefit greatly from a study of the material conditions of the people in biblical times: i.e. their religious, political and socio-economic situation. But they do so in order to get a better grounding of the text's meaning 'for us'. In this framework scientific exegesis can reclaim its proper role and function, placing itself in the service of the biblical text's meaning 'for us' . . . the common people are also eliminating the alleged 'neutrality' of scholarly exegesis . . . the common people are putting the Bible in its proper place, the place where God intended it to be. They are putting it in second place. Life takes first place! In so doing, the people are showing us the enormous importance of the Bible, and at the same time, its relative value – relative to life.[4]

Theology is not just a matter of abstract reflection, therefore, but reflection on understandings which are based on an active involvement. The meaning of Scripture and tradition is subordinated to experience as a prior datum, the text of everyday life given priority over the text of the Bible. Patterns of biblical exegesis which have emerged in parts of Latin America over the last twenty years offer a more recent example of the way in which the practical faith of the non-professional reader can be resourced by a mode of reading of the Scriptures which does not need (even if it was often supported by) sympathetic intellectuals.[5]

In popular education the principal objective is to 'read' the world. In other words it is 'the book of life' which is primary and so what is required are the skills to read that. That initial move is fundamental and explains the heart of liberation theology which prioritises the act of solidarity, the identification with the poor and vulnerable (itself of course resonating with biblical themes, but the inspiration comes from the actual experience itself). There is an optimism that the perspective of the poor and marginalised allows clarity of vision

[4] Mesters, 'The Use of the Bible', pp. 14–15.
[5] West, *Academy of the Poor*; West (ed.), Reading Other-Wise.

which is justified by the conviction that the 'little ones' (Matt. 11:25, 18:5, 10) have an epistemological privilege which is either denied or occluded among those with different social status. This is crucial for so much of what goes under the umbrella of liberationist hermeneutics, whether it be feminist hermeneutics or Black theology or contextual theology: what drives understanding is experience – of poverty, of oppression, of actual injustice. Thus, the task of engaging with the Bible as an active subject is theologically significant as much in the act of interpretation (in the value that it gives to the person doing the interpreting and their sense of community) as the actual result of the interpretation. In this it contrasts with more mainstream hermeneutics where orthodoxy is something to be understood (and explained by those usually equipped by their training to understand it) and applied in various contexts. Thus, however various the contexts the content of what is applied remains the same. In the liberationist perspective both that with which one engages (the Bible) and the context will vary. What those engaged have in common is the fact that they are the poor and the marginalised. Unsurprisingly, the hermeneutical method put those who practised this kind of method at odds with some of those in ecclesiastical power, even if the actual results of the interpretation were much less detrimental to orthodoxy than the method might suggest. This method was widely adopted by the Roman Catholic hierarchy in many parts of Brazil in the 1980s as the chosen instrument of Christian pedagogy in many dioceses.

The task of reading the world, however, is not straightforward. There is, at least in theory, a 'twin-track' approach in which the Bible and life together provide the track on which the vehicle of the hermeneutical process takes place. This view encapsulates two issues which in theory and practice are important for liberation theology. First of all, such an approach guarantees the necessity of the more ecclesial, Scripture (and tradition) to ensure the stability – indeed, continuing functioning – of the reading of life. The practice does not always maintain the dialectic for entirely understandable reasons. Any kind of dialectical or analogical method runs the risk of allowing one pole in the interpretative process to gain the ascendancy. When, as is often the case, the Bible provides a lens through which to look at the world, the meaning of the text can become so absorbed by present realities that the historical contingence and peculiarity of that to which the text bears witness may be lost. The statement by the popular educator Carlos Mesters quoted above indicates the importance of both poles, even though in this formulation, reflecting the priority given to the 'book of life' in the Brazilian sequence, the Bible's role is an essential though ancillary one.

The attempt to ensure that the ecclesial context of liberation theology is always part of the mix is encapsulated by the interaction between Bible, life and community. The ecclesial context is seen in the meeting for reflection not just on the Bible but on life viewed in the light of the Bible, which has been an important feature of much popular education. In this the checks and balances (notwithstanding the power-play at work as dominant personalities push meetings in particular directions) contrast with the individualistic readings which are so endemic in Protestantism. That is true whether it is the lone reader engaging with the Bible in spiritual devotions or the solitary scholar in the study poring over the meaning of the biblical text. One should not idealise the participative process and never play down the 'top down' contribution of the information and the slant given by the catechist or trained person. This is exemplified by Ernesto Cardenal's approach to the biblical text in *The Gospel in Solentiname* which gave a subtle steer to the discussion however much the contributions from the campesinos may have informed the understanding of the text in relation to their context.

The tripartite character of hermeneutics extends the Bible–life dialectic to embrace the importance of reading in community, thereby implicitly stressing the importance of a communal understanding of reading which in effect is a prophylactic against individualism and inserts into the process a key element of catholic Christianity – the sense of the community. In this model the emphasis on community is contemporary, but the important thing is that the sense of attending to others as a necessary complement to one's own understanding inserts a basic feature of ecclesial life.

But an important element of liberationist hermeneutics (evident also in Clodovis Boff's model, which we shall consider shortly) is the need to include an awareness of a diachronic perspective: the struggle to which the text bears witness historically. Here the whole reading project is closest to what is most familiar about the reading of the Bible in the contemporary academy. Where it differs from much academic exegesis are the issues on which the readers are asked to focus: how the people in the story lived; where the people in the stories were in the structure of society; who had the political power in that society; and, finally, what was the dominant ideology of the day and how it related to the possibly counter-cultural stand taken in the passage studied. So, for example, how people took on board ways of thinking which were conditioned by the interests of those in power even at the expense of their own interests.

Here what the text might have meant in its original context is explored, thereby underlining the importance of the integrity of the text as a witness to the life of the people of God at another time and place. The biblical text is

understood as a witness to the situation of a people who were oppressed. The questions which are asked about the biblical text are not those usually asked in most handbooks to biblical exegesis, which tend to focus on the following: when was it written? What does it tell us about God and their religion, but also about the sort of people who are the subjects of the text's concern, their relationship to political and economic power and how their views may have been formed by the culture of their day, and the extent to which these have caused them to feel in some ways inferior compared with the rich and powerful? The book of Exodus in particular has become a witness to a story of the liberation of a people from a subaltern status and its struggle through the action of leaving its situation of slavery to be freed from the bondage of inferiority with the possibility of a new way of thinking and behaving. Here, the sense of relating to the life of a people of God lived at another time is stressed with a tacit assumption that the Bible is in large part a witness to the story of a people who, like the poor in modern Brazil, find themselves dealing with poverty and marginalisation, homelessness, both spiritual and physical.

The emphasis is on reading in community, attentiveness in reading and the rejection of biblical literalism and trying to get at the political struggle to which the text bears witness. The quest for meaning is one that is ongoing, never static, and never reduced to a simple obedience to 'what the Bible says', or 'how the Bible speaks', for what God might speak through the Bible will inevitably be contingent on the situation of those addressed. But the key to the whole reading process is the way in which epistemology and practice coincide. This is a central component of liberationist hermeneutics. It is Christian practice which Gustavo Gutiérrez describes as the fruit of 'Contemplation and commitment within history' in which 'the mystery reveals itself through prayer and solidarity with the poor'.[6]

What liberationist hermeneutics requires is not only reading which is the result of contemplation on a text and tradition but the ability to 'read' life and to do so with that degree of contemplation which allows awareness of the extent to which prejudice and generalisation can reduce what it is one sees. It offers a language with which one might interpret the world and facilitates discernment, for it reflects back to us what we see in the world as a result of our meditation on it. Such an activity is less a form of allegorical interpretation in which one explains what is *really* going on in the text than the juxtaposition of biblical narrative and the situation which one observes in the world, so that one item interprets the other. It is Janus-like, looking two ways: towards

[6] Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, p. 3.

the Bible on the one hand and, on the other, the contemporary context. For example, on the one hand Leviticus 25 and on the other the situation in which large ranches leave millions of landless peasants dependent on subsistence farming, or, worse, occasional labourers on large estates. This is a constant theme of the politics of the highly influential Movimento Sem Terra, the landless movement in contemporary Brazil. The liberationist method expands the horizon of divine revelation to include the experience of the political. Divine revelation is not confined to narrowly ecclesial instruments, for struggle, experiences of persecution, torture, history, along with older subjects of 'natural theology' (creation and nature) all, properly understood, contribute to revelation. So, it offers a comprehensive form of natural theology which requires social sciences to complement philosophy to understand context and history. These sentiments echo the optimistic, epistemological ecumenism of the 1965 Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.[7]

Popular education using liberationist hermeneutics was a key component of pastoral programmes in many Brazilian dioceses. Many contributed to this work, but it was inspired by the work of the distinguished educator Paulo Freire (1921–97). In his pedagogical writings Freire emphasises the link between knowing and doing, experience and learning. He criticises a view of education in which students become accumulators storing material away as if in a banking process, the 'banking concept of education', in which the all-knowing teacher fills the grateful, ignorant and inert students with deposits of 'knowledge'. What Freire promoted was a process whereby human beings engage in active yet critical forms of education through which they embrace both their world and each other. Freire believed that education must be the site of transformation in which the traditional pupil–teacher relationship is dealt with, for this relationship maintains and mirrors other forms of oppression within society. So, the ways in which one engages in theological education are inseparable from the questions that theology deals with. Thus, the learning process is transformed into a student-centred education. This is far from being a fashionable learning technique; it is central to the understanding of power relations both in a local community and especially in the reading group that there is engagement with those power relations as part of the educational process. This is crucial for understanding the character of liberationist hermeneutics.

[7] *Gaudium et Spes*, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, esp. paragraphs 44 and 62.6; Walsh and Davies, *Proclaiming Justice and Peace*, pp. 106, 119.

What we have in this way of engaging with the Bible is the practice of an analogical method. Latin American liberationist hermeneutics is succinctly set out by Clodovis Boff.[8] Boff describes two different kinds of approach to the Bible. One is more immediate, in which the biblical story becomes a type for the people of God in the modern world. Boff contrasts two ways of engaging with the Bible in liberationist hermeneutics. One of these he terms 'correspondence of terms' and the other 'correspondence of relationships'. The first refers to a situation in which a reader identifies with a person or event in the Bible, and involves the insertion of the reading subject into the biblical narrative so that the Bible offers a way of understanding. Thus, Abraham's uprooting from his ancestral home and the long journey to the promised land offered a template for the internal immigration which was the lot of many North Easterners in Brazil as they journeyed south to be part of the sprawling shanty towns on the periphery of big cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

Boff sets out the correspondence of terms method as follows:

$$\frac{\text{scripture}}{\text{its political context}} = \frac{\text{theology of the political}}{\text{our political context}}$$

This method has affinities with the different facets of the hermeneutical approach in which the situation identified with the Bible is completely identified with that of the readers. It evinces many similarities with the kind of interpretation we find in a passage such as 1 Corinthians 10:11, where Paul tells the Corinthians that what was written in the Bible was directed to them: 'These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come.' Indeed, it is what Hans Frei said was typical of pre-critical biblical hermeneutics. When Frei wrote that 'in the process of interpretation the [biblical] story itself, constantly adapted to new situations and ways of thinking, underwent ceaseless revision, but in a steadily revised form it still remained the adequate depiction of the common and inclusive world',[9] he could have been describing aspects of liberationist hermeneutics. Much earlier, such a conviction that biblical texts apply to their readers and that their readers in some sense live the texts by allowing the biblical story to be their own is also typical of the hermeneutics of late fourth-century biblical commentator Tyconius, who was himself

[8] Boff, *Theology and Praxis*; see also Sugirtharajah, *Voices from the Margin* (1991 edn.), pp. 9–35.

[9] Frei, *Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, p. 3.

on the margins of orthodoxy as a member of the Donatist church but very influential on the biblical hermeneutics of Augustine.[10]

$$\frac{\textit{Scripture}}{\textit{its content}} \longleftarrow\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\!\longrightarrow \frac{\textit{ourselves}\left(\textit{theology of the political}\right)}{\textit{our context}}$$

The other approach (preferred by Boff) is what he describes as a 'correspondence of relationships' method. Here the Bible is read through the lens of the experience of the present, thereby enabling it to become a key to understanding that to which the scriptural text bears witness: the life and struggles of the ancestors in the faith. This exploration of Scripture in turn casts light on the present. Boff argued that this method does not presuppose the application of a set of principles or theological programme or pattern to modern situations. We need not, then, look for formulas to 'copy' or techniques to 'apply' from Scripture. What Scripture will offer us are rather something like orientations, models, types, directives, principles, inspirations – elements permitting us to acquire, on our own initiative, a 'hermeneutic competency' and thus the capacity to judge – on our own initiative, in our own right – 'according to the mind of Christ', or 'according to the Spirit', the new unpredictable situations with which we are continually confronted. The Christian writings offer us, in Clodovis Boff's words, 'not a what but a how, a manner, a style, a spirit'.[11] Those words are important. What Boff wrote about the interpretation of the Bible applies just as much to the way in which Christians approach the whole of life. The two dimensions of interpretation, the text and its context and the readers and their context, are both necessary.

In this the relationship between text and reader is maintained by insisting that there is a dialectic between the understanding of the text and the experience of the reader. In contrast to the 'correspondence of terms' approach, however, the sense of distance between the readers and their experience and the text as a witness to the people of God at another time and place, however many affinities there may be in terms of the issues and experience, is in some sense set apart and maintains an integrity which stands over against the reader. Also, subtly, in this approach the immediacy of reference of the reader is informed by the expertise of those who illuminate the situation to which the text bears witness. Where this method differs from the kind of historical study which has been typical in European and North American exegesis of the

[10] See e.g. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* 4.426; see also Tilley, *The Donatist World*.
[11] Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, p. 149.

Bible is that the engagement with the text does not bracket out contemporary questions and experience in favour of a detached investigation of the ancient historical context of the biblical book and its origins.

In the 'correspondence of relationships' method, one must look at the correspondences between the relationship of text to context in the case of both the biblical text, which bears witness to the life and struggles of the people of God at a particular time and place, and the modern 'text of life'. So, the relation of the contemporary situation of the people of God, properly understood, sociologically and politically, stands in an analogical situation to that to which the Bible bears witness and may inform, inspire and challenge modern readers of the Bible.

There is some ambiguity about the relative priority between text and experience in what Boff writes. According to Boff, 'the thrust of the hermeneutic movement comes from scripture'.[12] Boff's reference to Augustine[13] suggests that, while political theology gives priority to the present context, the world has in the last resort to be read through Scripture. But Boff's 'correspondence of relationships' model[14] seems to imply that there is a two-way process involving reading life through the Scriptures and the Scriptures through life. In his diagrammatical encapsulation of this method, however, Boff suggests that in the dialectical relationship between experience and text the former may be a heuristic device to help illuminate that ancient situation to which the Bible bears witness, confirmed by the following: 'The hermeneutical equation I have drawn does not "travel a one-way street", or "read from left to right", from scripture to ourselves. The relationship is circular, like any genuine hermeneutic relationship. I might speak of a "dialectical hermeneutic".'[15]

Rosemary Radford Ruether also stresses the importance of experience as a motor of contemporary interpretation.[16] Scriptural tradition is constantly renewed through the test of experience. She finds in the Bible 'breakthrough experiences that shed revelatory light on contemporary events so as to transform them into paradigms of ultimate meaning . . . but new experience offers a new insight on them'. It is what she describes as a 'prophetic-messianic tradition' which offers a critical perspective through which the biblical tradition can be re-evaluated, in new contexts. It is a tradition which releases what is the

[12] Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, pp. 150–1, noted by Bennett, '"Action Is the Life of All"', pp. 44–5.
[13] Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, p. 151 and n. 84; Bennett, '"Action Is the Life of All"', p. 45.
[14] Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, p. 147.
[15] Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, p. 149.
[16] Radford Ruether, 'Feminist Interpretation'; Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, pp. 12–50.

truly liberating Word of God, directed against both the sinful deformations of contemporary society and the limitations of past biblical traditions, which saw in part and understood in part, and whose partiality may have even become a source of sinful injustice and idolatry.

Christianity is not 'enclosed in a past revelation' for it is 'an eschatological faith. It lives by the norm of the reign of God in the still unrealized future of creation, not by a fixed, completed past.'[17] The emphasis on the yet unrealised future, and the participation in working for this future, she suggests, are characteristic not only of the liberationist approach to theology but are key to the New Testament itself, with roots in the prophetic hope of Judaism. This inspires the critique of the present and a longing, and working, for something different. The 'prophetic principle', found, for example, in the prophetic texts and the life and teaching of Jesus, includes critique of religion which offers an ideological legitimation for the status quo, of political, social and economic oppression. Present experience sheds light on those biblical elements, allowing them to encourage and to inspire new resistance, faith and hope and the determination not to allow oppression to triumph.

Radford Ruether's hermeneutical model has many affinities with Clodovis Boff's 'correspondence of relationships' model. In both there is an emphasis on underlining the dialectic between text and life and the mutually illuminative and corrective process that is involved. What is more, as Radford Ruether rightly points out, in the correlation of feminist and biblical critical principles, any biblical liberative tradition is in constant need of re-evaluation in new contexts, because of the inevitable tendency to fossilise the past 'which saw in part and understood in part'.[18]

Radford Ruether contextualises the discernment of prophetic principle in the context of women's experience. Faced with the historical experience of oppression, women have gone to the Bible and found passages of criticism and hope for liberation; cumulatively the common strands of 'the golden thread' have emerged. But it is a thread which has to be woven; it is not, to change the metaphor, a nugget, which is sitting there waiting to be found. The experience of oppression and the process of discernment and understanding is crucial in this. Human creativity born of experience is the necessary means of gestation to bring it to birth.

If there are bits that shine out in the tradition, biblical or otherwise, it is because like the moon in relation to the sun it is reflected light. It is the light of

[17] Hampson and Radford Ruether, 'Is there a Place for Feminists?'
[18] Radford Ruether, 'Feminist Interpretation', p. 117.

experience, which enables an awareness that there may be fragments, which suggest that, *mutatis mutandis*, people have been along this road before. But like precious stones the worth of these historical nuggets, biblical or otherwise, is entirely relative. There is nothing intrinsically of worth in gold, silver or platinum, other than what we give it. It is the sense of the cumulative value of the use of the Bible in particular ways, the choice of passages of social critique, of the favouring of the downtrodden and vulnerable, the hope for a better world and the struggle involved in getting there which repeatedly has resonated with people throughout history, and been the way in which the strands of a narrative have been woven together. There is no unambiguous, clear 'prophetic' or 'messianic' principle; on the contrary, there are false prophets and false messiahs, those who say what the powerful want to hear and those messiahs who create dystopias. Historical study of the interpretation of the Bible shows similar hermeneutical patterns emerging, but it is *our* collection of those moments where individuals have shone the light of experience on the same texts or done so in similar ways which has allowed an accumulation of strands to emerge which enable one to discern a particular interpretative thread throughout the Bible to which the epithet 'liberationist' may be attached.

What Rosemary Radford Ruether offers in her hermeneutical model is the mix of the theological and the experiential, with the latter being the motor which drives the identification of biblical themes, which illuminate and empower the struggle for a better world. The refusal to distinguish scholarship and life is key to Radford Ruether's work and to the understanding of the particular historical approach taken in this chapter. This is not about the merging of the two but allowing life to set the agenda for the historical study. This in no way distorts the history. Rather, it enables the reader to explore hitherto neglected corners of the Bible using a method which reflects all that is best in what Hans-Georg Gadamer has illuminated about the hermeneutical basis of research in the humanities.

15

Feminist readings of the Bible

JORUNN ØKLAND

Feminist reading, the 'mother' of other gender-critical readings

Male and female feminists (those who want to change society into a more gender-just one) are taking on the Bible, which has been used historically to justify the subordination of women to men. It has been understood to explain the creation of woman as 'the second sex' to borrow Simone de Beauvoir's term – in other words, as an afterthought. Eve has been blamed for bringing sin into the world and Paul has been used to exclude women from public and religious leadership roles.

Still, the prolific development of gender theory, especially, and the strengthening of feminist scholarship more generally over the last fifty years, have changed the starting point of feminist biblical scholarship even further. Feminist scholars no longer have to start by pointing out that our sources are androcentric and that androcentric scholarship and interpretation represents but a limited perspective; this can now be taken for granted. Instead, in a time when feminist/gender-critical theory and method have developed into academic fields of their own, issues in gender studies can be taken as points of departure to explore what gender-critical perspectives might contribute to an appreciation of the biblical texts. The shift, however, is not just a result of biblical and other gender studies becoming more established and hence in a position to set their own agenda. It also relates to 'the linguistic turn' of the humanities, which brought with it a stronger interest in critical approaches to texts, literature and the act of reading. 'Feminist readings' of the Bible narrowly speaking thus characterises the oldest and still largest area of an increasingly wider field of gender-critical readings that today also includes womanist, mujerista, queer, translesbigay, men's, masculinity, intersectional readings among others. There will be no space here to cover all of these developments and their geographical origins. This chapter will present the genealogy of

contemporary feminist readings rather than the broad spectrum of personal names, examples and locations. The term 'gender-critical' will include all these variants that feminist exegesis has engendered. The presupposition will be that it is epistemological changes that have made possible changes in feminist readings and inspired struggles for women's equality and liberation, not the other way round.

Genealogy: feminist readings before the name

Feminist reading of the Bible has already acquired a history of its own. Its story has been told quite a few times already, and in many of the accounts the beginning is set by the emergence of *The Woman's Bible* in America in 1895. Another version of the story holds that feminist reading of the Bible as an academic project only started in the 1960s. Even if the intention may have been to 'redeem' feminist exegesis from its Western historical matrix in order to release its more universal potential, the problem is that these stories represent feminist reading as a very recent phenomenon still promising, still unfolding, and it hides how previous periods of flourishing and unfolding have been followed by backlashes of various kinds. To ignore the longer, messier history and only focus on recent academic feminist readings displays a lack of a historicised self-understanding, that is, of how feminism has survived through periods of radical change, and along with the bathwater goes the baby: the ability to cope with *future* and *change*, feminism's goal. As Adrienne Rich pointed out, 'Re-Vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival.'[1] Hence we will here be more historically conscious and operate with a less purist definition of feminist readings of the Bible, showing that even if feminist reading as an academic pursuit presupposed the entry of women into academic posts, it has a genealogy going much further back and taking place under other names, configurations and hybridisations: feminist readings not only preceded the *Woman's Bible*, but even the Enlightenment itself, which established the philosophical possibility of thinking equality between the sexes. All (including pre-Enlightenment) readings that aim to overturn gender hierarchies where the male is posited above the female will here be counted as 'feminist'. This is also the definition of 'feminist' presupposed in the title of Marla Selvidge's book *Notorious Voices: Feminist Biblical Interpretation 1500–1920*.

[1] Rich, 'Re-Vision', p. 18.

Presuppositions and feminist readings

The reading subject and the Bible

The *sola scriptura* principle going back to the Protestant Reformation expresses the status of the Bible as the only source of divine revelation. In spite of the fact that this ideal principle is impossible to put into hermeneutic and political practice, it is one of the epistemological presuppositions for the emergence of feminist readings. The immediate consequence of this principle for Protestant women was that their position became dependent on what the Bible at any time was taken to 'say' about them – Luther's own misogynist statements in the *Table Talks* should be well known. But the principle also meant that a 1,500–1,800-year tradition of female subordination was no longer in itself a valid argument for it, and that the individual should know and interpret the Bible for *him*-self. However, early on, women too took the opportunity, such as Argula von Grumbach when she states that 'I am not unacquainted with the word of Paul that women should be silent … but, when no man will or can speak, I am driven by the word of the Lord when he said, "He who confesses me on earth, him will I confess. . . . " I send you not a woman's ranting, but the Word of God, I write as a member of the Church of Christ.'[2] A century later, women within the British Non-Conformist tradition realised that if they could show that according to the Bible women were created in God's image as equally valuable and responsible as men, and are represented by Paul as speaking subjects and performing cultic functions such as preaching, praying and prophesying, then there was no reason why women should not have access to the offices where such cultic functions are institutionalised, even if through most of the church's history they had been excluded from such access. On this presupposition, Margaret Fell wrote the tractate *Women's Speaking Justified, Proved and Allowed of by the Scriptures* probably around 1666, when she was imprisoned for prophecy, and after other early Quaker women, such as Priscilla Cotton and Mary Cole, had written more briefly on the topic. Fell put biblical passages up against each other, and the tractate is throughout 'littered' with scriptural quotes. All the women prophets of the Hebrew Bible, John 20 and the first female resurrection witnesses are called upon to outbalance the attention and focus that the men in the social and ecclesial hierarchies of her day gave to 1 Corinthians 14:33–5 and 1 Timothy 2:11.

In addition to the *sola scriptura* principle, Fell's reading strategy further presupposes the equality of women and men redeemed *in Christ* (i.e. not

[2] See Bainton (ed.), *Women of the Reformation*, pp. 97–100.

yet in creation, which is still understood in hierarchical terms). Finally she distinguishes between the Apostle's actual, silencing words to women and his intentions expressed elsewhere.

Female, created bodies can also embody generic mind and reason

The next epistemological presupposition to consider emerges during the Enlightenment, when feminism *as we know it* (i.e. as a political movement for change and a system of thought) starts to take shape. As historian Denise Riley states:

> To read the work of 'Jane Anger' [sixteenth century] as preconditions for eighteenth-century feminism elides too much, for it suggests that there is some clear continuity between defensive celebrations of 'women' and the beginning of the 1790s claims to rights for women, and their advancement as potential political subjects. But the more that the category of woman is asserted . . . the more its apparent remoteness from 'humanity' is underwritten.[3]

I contested the common understanding of feminism in the introduction; one might add that the pre-Enlightenment Quaker women went well beyond Jane Anger and the *Querelle des femmes* genre, in that they also claimed equality – although in Christ and with reference to the Bible, not yet to the body politic. (I have not considered the *Querelle* here, because I agree that it does not feministically challenge existing hierarchies.)

René Descartes (1596–1650) has often been accused by feminists of introducing the radical separation between mind and body that led to the identification of male with reason and women with body – in short, to the detached, male, disembodied Enlightenment subject. But the identification of women with body, and the denigration of both, existed long before Descartes. Further, by positing *substantia cogitans*, the reasoning subject, as separate from (but still related to) a body, he also paved the way for an understanding of mind and reason that did not presuppose a *male* body. The consequence of this for feminist readers of the Bible was that God as divine mind could be conceived also in female terms. Some eighteenth-century women, among them the Shaker Ann Lee, read Genesis 1:27 to mean that 'there exists in the deity the likeness of male and female'.[4] Second, it became possible to read women as fully human not just in Christ, but also *in principio*, in principle, in the beginning (creation), and hence also outside the church. This paved the way for feminists to argue

[3] Riley, 'Does Sex Have a History?', p. 28.
[4] Quoted from Whitson, *The Shakers*, pp. 214–16.

for women's equality without referring to the Bible: compared to the feminists of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, biblical arguments are relatively absent in Mary Wollstonecraft.

Changes in the Enlightenment, then, centre on the question whether equality is given in Christ or in creation, and also on the place from which feminists read the Bible: feminist readers increasingly positioned themselves *within* 'humanity' and the body politic, and criticised or appealed to the Bible from *outside* the church.

An example of such a post-Enlightenment feminist project is found in the Norwegian feminist Aasta Hansteen, who before 1870 drafted 'Woman Created in God's Image'. A radical vision of equality between man and woman is presented as an interpretation of Genesis 1. The final publication (1878) also includes the story of how her draft vision of a common humanity was rejected by the Scandinavian Lutheran churches. Drawing on historical-critical research, she exclaims: 'And I who believed . . . that new ideas and thoughts, founded on new research and a new appreciation of the Word of the Bible, could be built further upon, could be combined with the abovementioned foundation of our faith, the Bible!'[5] Apart from her constant return to Genesis and 1 Corinthians 14, the topic of a woman's right to publicly speak and write for herself is what binds Hansteen's pamphlet together.

Feminist readings, which usually were also women's readings, were problematic even before one started to consider the content, because they challenged the established interpretive authority. American feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton held that all religions degrade women, but women's worst enemies are found in Protestantism, where the leaders use the Bible to silence them.[6] This observation illustrates an effect of the *sola scriptura* principle: the Bible becomes the primary locus of struggle, and coming to terms with it is crucial for all change makers. Cady Stanton saw a window of opportunity for women to start working more systematically on Bible translation and interpretation after an 1870s Church of England translation had caused much controversy. For her *Woman's Bible* she put together an all-female publishing committee, including members with university degrees in classical languages, which addressed a much more comprehensive range of gender-relevant passages than the Genesis-cum–1 Corinthians obsession encountered so far (which is representative, but not the full story). The *Woman's Bible* was a new feminist reading in that its genre was like a commentary, going through the

[5] Hansteen, *Kvinden*, p. 8.
[6] Cady Stanton, *Woman's Bible*, vol. 1, p. 13.

Bible book by book. It was produced very much with an eye to using the Bible to argue for women's full humanity and citizenship.

For Cady Stanton the Word of God turns out to be the word men use to cripple women's moral and mental development, to keep them in subjection and to prevent their emancipation. Thus her team adapts the older Quaker women's 'method' of putting biblical sayings in contrast with themselves, but by the late 1800s philological and historical-critical insights enter the discussion as well: they are launched against conventional, misogynist readings.

Change in the status of the reading subject: feminist readers enter the academy

In today's climate of 'widening participation' in higher education, it is important to remember that only a very limited group of people had access to biblical studies as an academic discipline up until 80–120 years ago. Universities were geographically and financially out of reach for most people; women were not admitted, and in many academic theology programmes membership of a particular church was a requirement. This means that the pool of students was limited to male church members from mostly wealthy families. How this has influenced the rules of the 'game' of biblical studies we are only starting to realise, and will not be given full attention here. However, not many decades after the first female students were allowed into the theology programmes, they started seriously to question the androcentric focus and the patriarchal bias of what was taught. State universities, especially, gave feminists a platform from which to address the gender trouble of the Bible without having to fear sanctions.

It is noteworthy that the first feminist criticism of the Bible from within the academy took place as part of larger feminist theological arguments, such as in the 1960s work of Mary Daly, Elisabeth Gössmann, Kari Børresen and others. In exegesis, the 1960s saw some 'women-aware', apologetic works such as Else Kähler's, but we only get feminist exegesis in the stricter sense in the 1970s: Phyllis Trible[7] in Hebrew Bible and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza[8] in the New Testament to such an extent set the standard for what came to be seen as feminist exegesis that it is often used to judge what was before as not yet the real thing. When the focus here is on epistemological shifts (in presuppositions and epistemic subjects) such a judgement is well justified. Feminist readings

[7] Trible's *God and the Rhetoric* is based on articles dating back to 1973.

[8] Schüssler Fiorenza's 1979 article 'Word, Spirit and Power' is based on two 1976 articles, and contains in germ her historical and hermeneutical reflections.

of the 1970s aimed especially to address and criticise bias and blind spots in the discipline due to the hitherto narrow recruitment base of its practitioners; to point out the androcentrism and patriarchal values inherent in some of the biblical texts; and to point out how other passages (such as the Song of Songs, the book of Ruth) often turn out to be much more 'women-friendly' than later male interpreters have allowed them to be. Thus a more nuanced picture of 'the biblical view of women' starts to emerge.

'Discovering Eve':[9] sisterhood and more advanced notions of textuality enable women to look behind the texts

Many of the readings produced in the 1980s emphasised women's experience as the foundation for feminist knowledge. Onto this foundation an alternative structure of knowledge and identity could be built. This was the period when rather peripheral female biblical characters such as Miriam, Deborah, Mary and Priscilla suddenly found themselves in the limelight.

In the New Testament realm, the most groundbreaking work by far from this period is Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's *In Memory of Her*. Schüssler Fiorenza drew on the hermeneutics (understood both as epistemology and method!) developed especially in Paul Ricoeur's reading of Freud (hermeneutics of suspicion, reading against the grain), and read the texts against their patriarchal grain for the communities behind them. The pre-Pauline creed expressed in Galatians 3: 27 f. is her hermeneutic key: As a communal Christian self-definition it proclaims that in Christ all distinctions of religion, race, class, nationality and gender are insignificant. Hence the earliest Christian movement was a counter-cultural, multifaceted movement that fostered a discipleship of equals, before the later church absorbed the gender hierarchy and patriarchy of its non-Christian cultural environment. Although the biblical writings are androcentric and have been moulded in a patriarchal culture, they are nevertheless also women's writings in the sense that women have been present in all human history, but invisibly for the men who kept the records. Thus Schüssler Fiorenza not only drew attention to the fragility of the texts, but also prepared the road for the feminist critiques of the next stage, maintaining that in phallogocentric texts women can only be visible in the gaps, contradictions, or margins.

A focus on past women's experiences gave feminist readers the key to unlock the biblical texts filtered by androcentrism and access the social reality

[9] The title of Carol Meyers' groundbreaking book.

behind them – a reality far more complex than the texts allow for. This type of excavation and speculation, however, presupposed that 'women' are 'women' also transhistorically and regardless of race and class, and that women's experiences of patriarchy thus remain comparable. Against criticisms of such readings behind the texts, an appeal to the body was launched. The sex–gender distinction was used to differentiate between the gender constructions of ancient texts and the sexed bodies of women, which were pushed forward as the 'un-deconstructible' bedrock. But it had to be gradually admitted that there is no 'bedrock' body, only bodies marked and constructed by social processes.

Most feminist exegetes of the 1980s understood the biblical texts to leave room for the affirmation and liberation of women, and that biblical religion and spirituality are in themselves neither suppressive nor misogynist. There were however also increasingly more sceptical voices, informed by the feminist movement's exodus from the church (e.g. Mary Daly): The 'misery research' trend was a reaction against the quest for women's 'glorious past', their agency and dignity. Although a few extraordinary biblical women can be found, especially in the Hebrew Bible, patriarchy has the first and final word. Writing from within state feminist systems, this trend was especially strong among Scandinavian exegetes (especially Lone Fatum).

One lasting significance of the 1980s research is that it undermined the assumption that women had always and everywhere been as publicly invisible and powerless as they were in early modern Europe. There were important and powerful women around in ancient Palestine and imperial Rome. But by the next stage such women were seen more as exceptions.

Another lasting legacy of this period is the recovery project, still considered unfinished by most feminist exegetes. Twenty years later it has again gained momentum, when material remains are increasingly used by exegetes and ancient historians in cooperation to recover non-elite women also (see e.g. the work of Carol Meyers). Much of this material will continue to demand feminist socio-historical attention, preferably combined with more recent and refined tools of textual analysis.

'The Lady vanishes':[10] the historicity of gender terms and concepts

If some social historians had no method for addressing what textuality as such does to historical memory, the linguistic turn within humanities over the

[10] The title of a draft by Elizabeth Clark that later was published as 'Holy Women, Holy Words'.

last thirty to forty years meant that textuality and language structures became primary objects of study.[11] The linguistic turn in feminist readings of the Bible happened after the period of intensive work on women's history behind the texts which we have just described. Against this background, the texts were put in sharper relief as *constructs* and *representations*, that is, they were increasingly seen as ideological, rhetorical and fictional. But in the 1990s their possible relation to a text-external reality was put on hold entirely, as even readings against the grain presupposed some kind of stable link between history and text. In feminist readings marked by the linguistic turn, the link between biblical text and historical reality is characterised more as a 'trace' or 'glimpse': women have at best only left arbitrary traces in most of the male-authored texts of the Bible. Following social-historian-now-turned-post-structuralist historian Joan Scott,[12] Elizabeth Clark pointed out that we must move beyond the stage of feminist historiography in which we 'find' another forgotten woman and throw her into the historical mix.[13] This 'decision' set feminist exegetes free to focus more systematically and in-depth on the structures and representations of gender in the biblical texts themselves, resulting in many text-immanent explorations of female characters and gender structures (e.g. Cheryl Exum, Yvonne Sherwood, Tina Pippin).

Critics of postmodern approaches held that they failed to take seriously that there is at least something outside the text. But the linguistic turn was not necessarily a turn away from history even if it enabled some biblical scholars to wave goodbye to the 200-year-old historical-critical method. It enabled others to become even more historically reflective by thinking more diachronically. Language is in itself a historical phenomenon that makes thought and action possible. Gender terms can teach us something, if not about historical women, then about how the ancients structured their knowledge and assumptions about gender. When studying ancient Greek texts, for example, it is important to remember that even if *gyne* is often translated 'woman', the two words are not semantically overlapping; neither is *gyne* a semantically equivalent term to *aner*, 'man'.[14] *Gyne* is often translated 'woman', but there was no other, separate word for 'wife'. It seems to be a tendency that while 'wife', 'newly married woman', 'daughter', 'whore', 'slave', 'servant girl', 'widow'

[11] The term as such was first used as title of Richard Rorty's 1967 book (*The Linguistic Turn: Recent Essays in Philosophical Method*, ed. and with introd. by Richard Rorty (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967)).
[12] Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience', p. 796.
[13] Clark, 'Holy Women, Holy Words'.
[14] This example is extracted from my *Women in their Place.*

and so on, to a lesser extent are different roles that a *gyne* could have, *gyne* is, to begin with, a wife. That is, the role essentialises: female gendered individuals are defined by their sexual status, while a man is a man, and can have different roles. When *gyne* is also used as the main, collective designation and therefore has to be translated 'woman', it is because 'wife' was the paradigmatic and privileged modus of femaleness. In a similar vein, gender-mixed gatherings can be addressed in grammatical masculine form even if women are present (cf. Paul's use of the term 'brother'), because the male is the paradigmatic human. Linguistic inquiry along such lines treats language as a real, historical phenomenon; it is not a statement that 'real' women and men did not exist.

Thus another facet of the linguistic-textual studies of the 1990s retained a re-negotiated link to text-external realities: socio-cultural processes of signification are prior to notions of gender, and social forces have produced the gendered categories and terms, as well as the texts. Accordingly, it became urgent to explore the role of the Bible in the formation of identities and *categories* such as class, race, gender, agency and experience, and to discover how the Bible contributed to their foundational status. Daniel Boyarin, Karen King and Antoinette Wire thus discuss Galatians 3:26–9 as the origin of a (post-modern) feminist dilemma.[15]

Men, androgynes and hybrids

Recent interest in biblical masculinities is a logical consequence of the initially feminist insight that texts are gendered, and of postmodern feminism's farewell to the Enlightenment idea of generic *Man* and generic *Reason* – a pre-gendered *humanity per se*, which nevertheless always happened to be represented by the male. Previously, scholars could read texts about ancient men as if they were really about women too, so it did not matter if the latter were invisible on the surface level of the text. But if ancient male authors are androcentric and one can use their texts to recover neither ancient humans in general nor particular women of the past, then the logical consequence is that one should study the gender that *is* represented in these texts: the male. Examples of such studies are found in Stephen Moore and Janice Capel Anderson's *New Testament Masculinities*. The biblical authors are hence in focus as *males* promoting norms on gender and sexuality, not just women's subordination. If ancient texts claim to be about the human even when they are by men only for men only about men only (and even a limited, elite group of ancient men),

[15] In Ocker (ed.), *Galatians and Gender Trouble.*

this is now rather seen as one direction that ancient masculinity could take: it saw itself as the model representative of humanity, and women were not considered fully human or at least not capable of representing humanity in its totality. 'Men are gendered, too' could be the heading for this very promising feminist way of reading.

Poststructuralist feminists, with Judith Butler as the main exponent, have seen the dichotomisation of genders into male and female as the result of a basic heteronormative paradigm. Inspired by her, many feminists critically analyse how contemporary heteronormativity rightly or wrongly lays claim to the Bible. Along the same lines there is also an interest in how biblical polygyny, intimacy between members of the same sex, Encratites, eunuchs and androgynous ideals do not fit well with modern notions of sexuality and heteronormativity. Instead of being considered as oddities, as textual constructs, these can now be seen more as particularly symptomatic of ancient gender discourse. Where proper gender distinctions and order are seen as foundational to the continued existence of the world, a hybrid may represent a mediating category – or a threat. For someone who wants to deconstruct a dichotomous understanding of gender and sexuality, there is a lot of important source material in the Bible and its cultural environment.

Conclusion

The biblical texts on the creation of man and woman speak to the question of whether or not women are fully human, a discussion that was also running high through the Middle Ages. The texts on women's leadership, from Miriam and Deborah to Priscilla and Mary Magdalene, speak to the question of whether women can be seen as representative of humanity as a whole, or whether they are just the 'second sex' and derivative of (male) man. For good reason then, the biblical texts addressing women's creational godlikeness and women's leadership have provided the scarlet thread here.

As Genevieve Lloyd points out with regard to the history of philosophy, feminist exegesis also has an uneasy and largely unexamined relationship with its past. Part of the reason for this uneasiness is, I believe, the current, and vitally necessary, drive towards multicultural, multi-religious, globalised dialogue. Yet our individual and collective pasts are inevitably particular and unequal, which may be painful to acknowledge. This *particular* presentation has focused on how the development of mainly Western Christian feminist readings has been driven forward by changes in (the understanding of) the reading subject, the reading position (inside or outside the church, the

academy, the feminist movement), and changes in the status of the Bible. The Bible has been a political tool, a site of contestation and struggle, a weapon and a shield. It has played an important role in intellectual life and for social identities. In some periods there has been space for women to present their own readings of biblical texts, in others not. The development of feminist readings has not been a story of linear progress, but one of emergence, disappearance and then re-emergence. As long as the feminist view that humanity comes in several equally authorised variants is not absorbed in theology, symbolism and structures of academic and ecclesiastical power, feminist readings will remain necessary, but their presence will be unstable. Will their insights ever be absorbed, and the consequences taken? When Catholic theologian David Tracy was asked once what he thought would be the outcome of the encounter between feminism and religion, he responded, 'The next intellectual revolution.' Let us hope that he is correct.

16

Post-colonial readings of the Bible

STEPHEN D. MOORE

What counts as 'post-colonial reading' in the context of biblical studies? 'Anti-colonial reading is not new', as R. S. Sugirtharajah notes. 'It has gone on whenever a native put quill pen to paper to contest the production of knowledge by the invading power.'[1] Such an approach to the topic I was assigned for this chapter would certainly yield a temporal range consonant with a 'History of the Bible'. But it would also be unmanageable within the assigned word-length, and so, taking the coward's way out, I propose to begin my brief survey with that recent body of biblical scholarship that explicitly styles itself 'post-colonial reading'.

Monographs and edited collections in biblical studies with the terms 'post-colonial' or 'post-colonialism' either in their titles or significantly deployed within their covers have included: Ahn, *The Reign of God and Rome in Luke's Passion Narrative*; Boer, *Last Stop before Antarctica* and Boer (ed.), *Vanishing Mediator?*; Donaldson (ed.), *Postcolonialism and Scriptural Reading*; Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*; Dube and Staley (eds.), *John and Postcolonialism*; Jean K. Kim, *Woman and Nation*; Uriah Y. Kim, *Decolonizing Josiah*; Liew, *Politics of Parousia*; McKinlay, *Reframing Her*; Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse*; Moore and Segovia (eds.), *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism*; Runions, *Changing Subjects*; Samuel, *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*; Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies* and Segovia (ed.), *Interpreting beyond Borders*; Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism*, *The Bible and Empire*, *The Bible and the Third World*, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations* and Sugirtharajah (ed.), *The Postcolonial Bible* and *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader*; and Vander Stichele and Penner (eds.), *Her Master's Tools?* In addition, more than seventy biblical articles or essays with one or other of our two terms inscribed in their titles and/

[1] R. S. Sugirtharajah, 'A Brief Memorandum on Postcolonialism and Biblical Studies', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 73 (1999), pp. 3–5 at p. 3.

or embedded in their analyses have also appeared at the time of writing, not counting those already included in the books just listed.

But are we operating with too narrow a definition of 'post-colonial reading' in biblical studies? Should we also include work that, while not explicitly adducing either of our two concepts, centres on certain other concepts cognate to them, most notably the concept (and omnipresent reality) of 'empire'? Over approximately the same time period as for the books listed above, a further stream of monographs and edited collections with the terms 'empire' or 'imperial' emblazoned in their titles, but having little or no significant recourse to the term(s) post-colonial(ism) within their covers (a revealing absence, as we shall see), has issued forth, steadily gathering strength: Carter, *Matthew and Empire* and *The Roman Empire and the New Testament*; Crossan, *God and Empire*; Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*; Horsley, *Jesus and Empire* and Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Empire* and *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*; Howard-Brook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire*; Riches and Sim (eds.), *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context*; Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word*; and Walsh and Keesmaat, *Colossians Remixed*. (No corresponding stream of work in Old Testament/Hebrew Bible studies is yet in evidence.) The relationship of this latter body of work (which I shall term 'empire studies') to the former, and the relationship of both to historical criticism, liberation hermeneutics and extra-biblical post-colonial studies will be my central focus for the remainder of this chapter. Close consideration of two further recent publications will facilitate our exploration of these relationships.

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It has taken post-colonial biblical criticism a little over a decade to migrate from the *Asia Journal of Theology* to the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (*JBL*). R. S. Sugirtharajah informs us that he himself 'was the first to introduce postcolonial criticism to biblical studies' in a 1996 article in the former journal.[2] In 2007 the first ever *JBL* article with the term 'postcolonial' in its title made its appearance, David A. deSilva's 'Using the Master's Tools to Shore up Another's House: A Postcolonial Analysis of 4 Maccabees'. The Society of Biblical Literature website modestly dubs *JBL* 'the flagship journal of the field',[3] and certainly one would be hard-pressed to name a more representative icon of mainstream biblical scholarship than this hugely over-submitted

[2] Sugirtharajah (ed.), *Voices from the Margin*, p. 72. He omits to list details of the article.
[3] See www.sbl-site.org/Publications/Publications_Journals_JBL_.

periodical. What does it take for post-colonial biblical criticism to move from the margins to the mainstream?

First, it appears to take a strategic bracketing of all contexts but the ancient one. In fairness to deSilva, I should mention that his article is superb on many levels. His analysis of 4 Maccabees is incisive and original, and will likely open up productive new paths of research on the book. As deSilva himself encapsulates his argument, the author of 4 Maccabees

> appears at first blush to be so fully accommodated to the dominant culture that he cannot think about his own heritage apart from the master's categories but on close inspection reveals himself to be an author of resistance literature, subjecting empire to trenchant critique, opposing the devaluing of the culture and way of life of the colonized *ethnos* of which he is a member, and promoting a model for effective resistance in his narration of the victory of the nine martyrs over the foreign king for widespread imitation by his audience.[4]

But it is not on the details of deSilva's analysis that I wish to comment here so much as his framing of it, together with his choice of subject matter. DeSilva observes in his introduction that the post-colonial lens 'has most frequently been employed to examine the use of the Bible and its interpretation as a means of advancing Eurocentric agendas and legitimating the hegemony of Western Europe and its partners, both in situations of formal imperialism and in the lingering aftermath of "empire"'.[5] How striking, then, not to say symptomatic, that post-colonial criticism's arrival, announced by name,[6] in the most closely guarded sanctum of mainstream biblical studies should find it coupled not with a text that is part of any biblical canon,[7] and hence not a text laden with any of the soiled colonialist baggage to which deSilva gestures, but rather with a text that stands outside the history of modern Western colonialism and its neo-colonial aftermath altogether, a text that, moreover, exceedingly few Jews or non-Orthodox Christians even know exists, apart from the elite cadre of specialist scholars.[8] Is contemporary relevance the first casualty

[4] DeSilva, 'Postcolonial Analysis', p. 101.

[5] DeSilva, 'Postcolonial Analysis', p. 100.

[6] DeSilva's naming of his 'postcolonial analysis' distinguishes his study from other recent *JBL* articles that have treated the theme of empire but have not claimed the label 'postcolonial'; see, e.g., Warren Carter, 'Are there Imperial Texts in the Class? Intertextual Eagles and Matthean Eschatology as "Lights Out" Time for Imperial Rome (Matthew 24:27–31)', *JBL* 122 (2003), pp. 489–515; Donald C. Polaski, 'Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin: Writing and Resistance in Daniel 5 and 6', *JBL* 123 (2004), pp. 649–69.

[7] Although 4 Maccabees does sit as an appendix to the Greek Orthodox canon.

[8] It would be disingenuous of me in the circumstances not to confess that I too have published on 4 Maccabees, and even in *JBL*.

of post-colonial criticism's assimilation to the ethos of mainstream biblical scholarship?

The 'mental attitude' associated with post-colonial hermeneutics, continues deSilva, 'has also contributed greatly to the reversal of the devaluation of indigenous cultures that accompanies imperialism, and to the construction of an alternative hermeneutics that honors the culture, experience, and reading and interpretative strategies of non-Western peoples'.[9] Typically in such hermeneutics, the ancient context of production of the biblical text being interpreted is brought into explicit dialogue with some contemporary context of reception, usually the socio-cultural context of the interpreter. Such work is amply in evidence in the long first footnote of deSilva's article that lists books he deems representative of post-colonial biblical criticism. These volumes are almost all by biblical scholars from the Two-Thirds World or from racial/ethnic minorities within the USA. Mixed in with the predictable titles, however – those containing the term 'post-colonial' – are other less-expected titles: *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*; *Jesus in Global Contexts*; *Exploring Afro-Christology*; *Reading from This Place*; *Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary US Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation*. Is all minority and 'Third-World' biblical scholarship now automatically to be regarded as post-colonial biblical criticism even when its practitioners do not identify it as such? Does post-colonial hermeneutics blend seamlessly and painlessly with liberation hermeneutics to the extent that they are now but alternative names for the same phenomenon? Consideration of a second recent publication will suggest some answers to these questions.

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The year 2006 saw the publication of the third edition of *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, a landmark anthology of contextual biblical hermeneutics. The third edition contained much that the 1991 first edition, or even the 1995 second edition, did not. Especially notable was the addition of a fourth part entitled 'Postcolonial readings'. To the first part of the collection, 'Reading strategies', an essay entitled 'Postcolonial biblical interpretation' had also been added. None of this was particularly surprising given that the volume's editor, R. S. Sugirtharajah, is the scholar who, more than any other, has been responsible for introducing the term 'post-colonial' into the lexicon of contemporary biblical studies. Indeed, the still-small

[9] DeSilva, 'Postcolonial Analysis', p. 100. He borrows the term 'mental attitude' from Sugirtharajah's description of post-colonialism.

subfield of post-colonial biblical criticism would be a good deal smaller still were it not for his prodigious industry.

The importance of *Voices from the Margin* inheres in the fact that it was the first major collection designed to showcase that influential inflection of liberation hermeneutics now variously termed contextual hermeneutics, vernacular hermeneutics, cultural exegesis, cultural interpretation, intercultural interpretation, or cultural studies. Acutely attuned to the socio-cultural location of the biblical interpreter, contextual hermeneutics may be said to relinquish the central (frequently Marxist-driven) focus on economics and the universal plight of the poor typical of classic liberation theology for a focus on the local, the indigenous, the ethnic and the culturally contingent, with the aim of recovering, reasserting and reinscribing identities, cultures and traditions that colonial Christianity had marginalised, erased, suppressed or pronounced 'idolatrous'.

How exactly is a contextual hermeneutic related to a post-colonial hermeneutic? What similarities and dissimilarities present themselves when, for example, we set the first edition of *Voices from the Margin* side by side with yet another Sugirtharajah-assembled collection, *The Postcolonial Bible* from 1998? The distance between the two volumes is not considerable, but neither is it insignificant. The multinational contributors to *Voices from the Margin* frequently attend to the lingering spectre of colonialism, insufficiently exorcised even in the majority of former colonies that have officially achieved independence and undergone decolonisation. Not surprisingly, the colonial and the post-colonial assume thematic centrality in a higher percentage of the essays in *The Postcolonial Bible*. Furthermore, and unlike *Voices from the Margin*, the field of extra-biblical post-colonial studies provides at least some of the contributors to *The Postcolonial Bible* with a fresh conceptual vocabulary and analytic apparatus with which to treat the themes of colonialism and imperialism in relation to biblical texts and their histories of interpretation. Like most of the contributors to *Voices from the Margin*, however, most of those to *The Postcolonial Bible* write explicitly out of their specific socio-cultural locations, and this tactic, as much as the thematic focus on colonialism and its complex aftermath, might be said to be a defining trait of the latter collection, as of much else that currently parades under the banner of post-colonial biblical criticism.

Further with regard to the relationship between post-colonial and liberation hermeneutics, Sugirtharajah himself has also had much to say. His own relationship to liberation hermeneutics appears to be one of obvious debt and partial estrangement. Not the least significant feature of his work

is his bold and extensive internal critique of the liberationist tradition from a 'post-colonial' perspective. Liberation hermeneutics, for Sugirtharajah, is largely prevented by its Christian presuppositions and investments from seeing the Bible as at once a source of emancipation and a source of oppression, and from respecting the truth claims of other religious traditions, even when those traditions are the characteristic religious expressions of the poor; while it conceives of oppression in turn in terms that are too exclusively economic, neglecting other forms of it based on gender, sexuality or race/ethnicity.[10]

Notwithstanding the sharp differences that Sugirtharajah posits between post-colonial and liberation hermeneutics,[11] the relationship between the two has frequently tended to be a symbiotic one. Only consider post-colonial studies' initial mode of entrance into the Society of Biblical Literature. The now disbanded program unit, the Bible in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America (BAACLA), served as the first forum for post-colonial studies within the society. At the 1998 annual meeting BAACLA featured a panel discussion of *The Postcolonial Bible*, while the 1999 meeting included a BAACLA session on 'Postcolonial studies and New Testament studies'. And the latest twist in this sometimes troubled but scarcely estranged relationship between post-colonial and liberation hermeneutics is Sugirtharajah's own appending of 'postcolonial readings' to the third edition of his now classic anthology of Third World biblical interpretation.

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DeSilva carefully differentiates his own project, however, from this brand of post-colonial biblical reading:

> While many practitioners focus the postcolonial lens on the analysis of how Scripture has been read and interpreted in particular situations, and on the analysis of particular readers of Scripture, I do not want to lose sight of the first level of analysis that, according to Fernando Segovia, postcolonial interpretation invites, namely, the analysis of imperialism or colonialism in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures (and related literature) themselves. How does the author of the text depict 'empire'? How does the author present the 'colonized' peoples? Does the author speak from the margins or from the centre

[10] See Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, pp. 203–75, and Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 103–23. These criticisms also find expression in the third edition of *Voices from the Margin*; see his 'Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation', in Sugirtharajah (ed.), *Voices from the Margin*, pp. 77–80.

[11] In an incisive review of the third edition of *Voices from the Margin*, Gerald West takes issue with what he sees in effect as a premature moratorium on liberation hermeneutics on the part of Sugirtharajah (www.bookreviews.org/bookdetail.asp?TitleId=5534).

> of power? Does the author speak on behalf of empire, legitimating it or advancing its interests (e.g., in the OT conquest and monarchical narratives), or creating spaces for resistance and the affirmation of an alternative set of interests (e.g., in the extreme, Revelation)?[12]

These four questions outline a potent agenda. But whence does it derive? It is not drawn so much from Fernando Segovia's work, I would contend, nor from any of the other post-colonial works that deSilva references in his footnotes, as from a related set of studies that he oddly omits to mention – that which I termed 'empire studies' at the outset of this chapter. To the cluster of *X and Empire* titles that I listed may be added, by reason of a shared preoccupation with the theme of empire, still other recent works, such as Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*; Elliott, *Liberating Paul*; Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story* and Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Politics*, to name but the main examples. DeSilva's four questions, articulated in the quotation above, are quintessentially those of empire studies. Increasingly such questions are 'in the air' in biblical studies, and as such are available for appropriation and application, whether by Ph.D. students in search of timely thesis topics or by seasoned scholars such as David deSilva.

And it is probably safe to predict that empire studies stands a far better chance of making significant inroads in mainstream biblical studies than any brand of post-colonial biblical criticism that requires navigation through the frequently dense discourse of extra-biblical post-colonial studies; for exceedingly seldom does the *X and Empire* work draw directly on the latter field. DeSilva's article is no exception. Not only does he not reference extra-biblical post-colonial studies at any point in the article, but once we exit its brief introduction there are no further references to intra-biblical post-colonial studies either. Armed with the four agenda-setting questions with which empire studies has provided him, all deSilva needs additionally in order to write his article is his expert erudition on 4 Maccabees and its secondary literature. This is the style of post-colonial biblical criticism to which the historical critic can most easily relate.

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Why is it only in the past decade or so that post-colonial reading (certainly as narrowly defined) has been a feature of biblical studies? Whence the term 'post-colonial', anyway? It is hardly a recent coinage. It seems to have been minted in the aftermath of the Second World War and first employed in such

[12] DeSilva, 'Postcolonial Analysis', p. 100.

expressions as 'the post-colonial nation-state'.[13] Whether or to what extent the term(s) 'post(-)colonial(ism)' ever expressed an unequivocal conviction that colonialism was now securely relegated to the past (this pastness being, indeed, the very import of the 'post-') is debatable. What is certain is that any such conception of the post-colonial has long seemed naive.

But if the term and concept have been available for a half-century or more, why is it only in recent years that they have begun to be used in biblical studies? The simplest answer is that the irruption of post-colonial in biblical studies is an effect of disciplinary symbiosis. In the 1990s post-colonial studies mushroomed as an interdisciplinary academic phenomenon, particularly in the USA (not coincidentally in a context in which the USA had become the sole superpower, as well as the most extensive and efficient empire the world had ever seen). The phenomenon made deep inroads in such fields as history and anthropology. Its heaviest concentration and saturation, however, was in the field of literary studies – actually a congeries of related fields 'that deal with the literatures of the modern European imperial nations',[14] and whose scholarly locus is the Modern Language Association of America, which boasts over 30,000 members in at least 100 countries. The institutionalisation of post-colonial studies in North American academia, and in Western academia more generally, had everything to do, presumably, with the emergence in the 1990s of the term 'post-colonial' in conference-paper titles at the joint annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature.

Is post-colonial studies, then, in all its diverse disciplinary manifestations, to be viewed as a Western academic product, purely and simply? Not quite. To begin with, the origins of post-colonial studies do not lie in academia per se, whether Western or otherwise. Contemporary histories of post-colonial studies customarily trace its intellectual roots to a disparate group of post–Second World War critics and literary authors, each of whom lived the transition from colonialism to post-colonialism in his particular cultural context and engaged in sustained reflection on colonialism and its complex aftermath, notably Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Chinua Achebe, C. L. R. James, Albert Memmi and Ngugi wa Thiong'o.[15]

[13] So Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies*, p. 186.

[14] Suvir Kaul, 'The Past in the Present: New Work in Postcolonial and Imperial Studies', *Criticism* 47 (2005), pp. 261–75 at p. 261.

[15] See, at minimum, Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*; Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*; Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*; James, *Beyond a Boundary*; Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*; Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind*. Ngugi is more of a contemporary of the other authors listed than the publication date of *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986) might suggest; his political plays and novels first began to appear in the early 1960s.

The work of three further critics – Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha – constitute a more immediate resource for contemporary post-colonial studies, even if they do not account directly for the naming and institutionalisation of the field, the latter rather being the result of such field-consolidating textbooks as Ashcroft et al., *The Empire Writes Back* and Ashcroft et al. (eds.), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. The late Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism* is now commonly said to have been seminal for the field as an academic discipline, although the book itself employed neither 'post-colonial' nor 'post-colonialism' in its terminological armature (even his 1993 'sequel' *Culture and Imperialism* declines to include either term in its index). *Orientalism* analysed 'the Orient' and 'the Oriental' as Western discursive constructs, with particular attention to nineteenth-century Western scholarship and its imperial contexts. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 1985 essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', a controversial meditation on the impossibility of 'speaking for' the marginalised and dispossessed, also helped to set the agenda of the nascent field, as did her 1987 collection *In Other Worlds*. A further Spivak collection, this one from 1990, is tellingly entitled *The Post-Colonial Critic*, the new academic personage of whom Spivak herself was rapidly becoming the exemplar. Her 1998 *magnum opus*, however, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, finds her archly renouncing the label 'post-colonial' for the field with which her name had become near-synonymous. Homi Bhabha's essay collection *The Location of Culture*, published in 1994, was also a major catalyst for the emergent field. More than any other, this book may be said to epitomise 'post-colonial theory'. The core essays in the collection (all of them of 1980s vintage) deal with nineteenth-century India, employing Bhabha's immensely influential analytic concepts in order to do so, notably colonial ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity. One of these essays, 'Signs Taken for Wonders', is even an exercise (of sorts) in biblical hermeneutics, an extended reflection on an intriguing episode that Bhabha had exhumed from the archives: an exchange on intercultural biblical interpretation conducted outside Delhi in 1817.

What Said, Spivak and Bhabha have in common with Fanon, Césaire, Memmi and the other precursors of post-colonial theory is that all three were born and raised in the global South. Said was educated in Jerusalem and Cairo, Spivak in Calcutta and Bhabha in Mumbai. But although from the South, they elected to live and work in the West. And although they have written from a position external to the West even while domiciled within it, they have also written from the pinnacle of the Western academic profession, which is to say from prestigious chairs at US Ivy League institutions, and their work is seen by many as compromised in consequence.

Post-colonialism in biblical studies has been less haunted by the spectre of institutional success. Chairs in the Bible and post-colonialism at Harvard or Yale, Oxford or Cambridge, or Heidelberg or Tübingen do not seem to be on the immediate horizon. This is not to say, however, that post-colonial biblical criticism is not itself a complexly situated and frequently conflicted phenomenon. I shall close with some comments on this issue.

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This chapter has largely been about the appropriation and assimilation of 'postcoloniality', that term denoting at minimum critical engagement with colonialism, with its origins in the lived experience of (post-)colonial subjects. In literary studies, postcoloniality has been assimilated to the dominant ethos of the discipline, nowhere more conspicuously than in the USA. Its assimilation in biblical studies has arguably been more complex. On the one hand, it has been grafted (not without scars) onto liberation hermeneutics, impelled, indirectly at least, by the consolidation of post-colonial studies as an academic field in such disciplines as literary studies. But the resultant formation in biblical studies has no exact analogue in literary studies. Not for the first time has a theory or methodology with its primary disciplinary locus in literary studies morphed into something distinctively different when adopted and adapted by biblical critics: consider the analogous transformation of structural narratology into narrative criticism, or that of ideology critique into ideological criticism. On the other hand, postcoloniality has been grafted onto historical criticism – which is to say assimilated, once again, to the dominant academic ethos, this time in biblical studies. I am referring here to the development I have dubbed 'empire studies'. I have argued that the *X and Empire* brand of post-colonial biblical criticism is the brand currently poised for the widest circulation in biblical studies (certainly in New Testament studies), as the one that represents the smoothest, least taxing and least threatening extension of historical criticism. In the Two-Thirds World, meanwhile, it is not hard to imagine the liberationist variant of post-colonial biblical criticism continuing to ride in the slipstream of contextual hermeneutics, and continuing to counter post-colonial biblical criticism's inherent inclination as an academic enterprise to coagulate into an esoteric discourse herme(neu)tically sealed off from the extra-academic world.

Yet we should beware both of idealising contextual post-colonial hermeneutics and dismissing empire studies. For the latter is not without teeth. What makes the current intensified preoccupation with empire in biblical studies genuinely significant is its concern with the question of whether or

to what extent biblical texts can be said to *resist* empire. All of the texts that would eventually make up the biblical canons were produced in the margins of empire, but with the Christianisation of Rome in the fourth century the margins moved to the centre. Jerome's Vulgate was the first official Bible of imperial Christianity. Locked in its embrace, the primary function of the biblical texts became that of legitimising the imperial status quo, a function that, covertly at least, continued down into the modern period.[16] Even the invention of critical biblical scholarship coincided with – and in ways yet to be adequately analysed was entwined with – the inexorable expansion of the great European empires to their outermost limits. Empire studies is united with other forms of post-colonial biblical criticism in the task of disentangling the biblical texts from an imperial embrace that spans the centuries, and to that extent stands in solidarity with the long tradition of anti-colonial biblical reading to which Sugirtharajah refers in the second sentence of the present chapter.

What of the idealisation of contextual post-colonial hermeneutics? The introduction to the third edition of *Voices from the Margin* is subtitled 'Still at the Margins'. If the centre or mainstream of academic biblical studies is to be measured by such criteria as the concentration of Ph.D.-accredited faculty, the locus of Ph.D.-granting institutions, the best-funded departments and programmes, the largest professional associations, the largest publishing houses with the largest backlists and so on, then the kind of biblical scholarship represented in such volumes as *Voices from the Margin* does indeed issue *from the margin*. But what would it mean if the centre and the margin were somehow to switch places? In the USA at present, for example, academic biblical scholarship of the kind enshrined in the most prestigious institutions is itself highly marginal in relation to the religious and political life of the nation. Would the situation be different were post-colonial biblical criticism, say, to be ensconced in the disciplinary mainstream in place of historical criticism? The example of post-colonial studies in the literary studies discipline suggests that it might not. In US academia the institutional rewards accruing to any intellectual phenomenon in the humanities seem to be in inverse proportion to its ability to influence public life or otherwise shape the national ideology. 'If the 1980s was the time of the subalterns, now is the time of the diasporic intellectuals', writes Sugirtharajah.[17] Nowhere is this more evident, perhaps, than in the

[16] See, e.g., Ralph Broadbent's study of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British biblical commentaries, which finds them to be almost invariably accommodated to the imperial status quo ('Ideology, Culture, and British New Testament Studies: The Challenge of Cultural Studies', *Semeia* 82 (1998), pp. 33–61).

[17] R. S. Sugirtharajah, 'Introduction', in Sugirtharajah (ed.), *Voices from the Margin*, p. 5.

interdisciplinary field of post-colonial studies, whether we are talking about a Spivak or a Bhabha, or a Segovia or a Sugirtharajah. But intellectuals, diasporic or otherwise, have a tendency to generate intellectual discourse, and in most cultures intellectual discourse has little or no audience outside the academy.

To appraise academic work, however, in such either–or categories – either it impacts society at large or it has no impact on society at large – is to misapprehend it. University or seminary classrooms are not sealed off from the larger society or wider world, but linked to them by multiple arteries. These arteries, however, can become clogged. While the locus of lived Christianity has moved decisively to the global South, the North continues to be the sanctioned training ground for academic biblical scholars, but students from the South in European or North American universities all too frequently experience their training in terms of irrelevance and continued colonisation.[18] Making biblical scholarship more relevant to more of the planet's population is not the least significant function of post-colonial biblical criticism.

Paradoxically, however, the term 'post-colonialism' is itself in danger of becoming irrelevant. In the larger field of post-colonial studies, not to mention the larger world, there are ample indications that 'post-colonialism' is slipping into the past.[19] Whatever chance the term had of capturing the geopolitical complexities of the post–Second World War era, it has far less chance of capturing those of the early twenty-first century. The term now in use all over the world to name the new geopolitical reality is, of course, 'globalisation'. The field of post-colonial studies is at present visibly engaged in catching up and coming to grips with globalisation.[20] And post-colonial biblical criticism cannot afford to be too far behind.

[18] So Musa W. Dube, 'Rahab Is Hanging Out a Red Ribbon: One African Woman's Perspective on the Future of Feminist New Testament Scholarship', in Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, Althea Spencer Miller and Musa W. Dube (eds.), *Feminist New Testament Studies: Global and Future Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 177–202 at p. 189.

[19] See Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, 'What Was Postcolonialism?', *New Literary History* 36 (2005), pp. 375–402 at pp. 379–80.

[20] See, e.g., Ania Loomba et al. (eds.), *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), especially part 1, Globalization and the Postcolonial Eclipse; Clara A. B. Joseph and Janet Wilson (eds.), *Global Fissures: Postcolonial Fusions* (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2006).

17

Jewish readings of the Bible

MARC ZVI BRETTLER AND EDWARD BREUER

At the dawn of the modern period

The Jewish engagement with the Hebrew Bible after 1750 was integrally connected to, and reflective of, the broad reshaping of Jewish religious and intellectual life in the modern era. As Jews began a process of integration into European society, they became increasingly attuned to modern intellectual currents and came to recognise that the new historical and philosophical thinking had far-reaching implications for their understanding of Judaism, including their scriptural traditions. The Jewish responses to these challenges were – and continue to be – highly complex and varied. Jews did not merely absorb and internalise new European approaches to religion and the study of religious texts; rather, they alternately sifted, adapted and resisted modern approaches to the Bible in the light of their distinct spiritual and religious needs. In this respect, the modern Jewish engagement with Scripture can be subdivided into two roughly equal periods, with the critical–scholarly developments of the 1870s serving as a watershed. Up until this decade, Jews responded to the advances of text and source criticism only tentatively or not at all; from the 1870s onward, with the significant advances of Julius Wellhausen and others, Jewish scholars devoted far more serious and sustained attention to the methods and conclusions of biblical criticism.

At the dawn of the modern period Jews were actively writing and publishing commentaries and supercommentaries to the Hebrew Bible, though much of this scholarship was derivative of medieval exegesis. Jewish scholars of North Africa, the Middle East and western European cities such as Amsterdam and Hamburg maintained the modes of Hebrew and Bible study pioneered by medieval Spanish scholars, but added little new. In Central and Eastern Europe Jews were largely uninterested in philological or grammatical text study, and the biblical scholarship emanating from these lands favoured homiletical exegesis. In the century leading up to 1750, then, Jewish scholarship

was for the most part unoriginal and unremarkable. The commentaries of this era focused mainly on the explication of midrashic readings of the biblical text or the classical medieval commentary of Solomon b. Isaac (Rashi), which had long attained near-canonical status. The Ashkenazic culture of European Jewry, moreover, was deeply ambivalent, if not indifferent, towards Bible study; rabbinic scholarship – the study of the Talmud, talmudic commentaries and the legal codes – was invested with far more pedagogic and scholarly importance. The Hebrew Bible, in short, was relegated to an honoured but secondary position; although chanted in the synagogue and incorporated in its liturgy, it was not central to Jewish study. The critical analysis applied to the Hebrew Bible in Benedict Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (1670) was altogether exceptional, not only in its then-radical conclusions, but also in its historical preoccupations. Spinoza's treatise, written in Latin but quickly translated into English and French, was either ignored by Jewish scholars or remained largely unknown to them, and its claims had no measurable impact on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jewish writings on the Bible.

These attitudes began to change during the course of the eighteenth century, as European Jewish scholars became increasingly critical of the neglect of Bible study in the Jewish curriculum, especially the absence of sound grammatical and textual skills. Solomon Hanau (1687–1746), an outstanding and prolific German scholar of the Hebrew language, tried to revive interest in the study of Hebrew grammar and philology as the *sine qua non* to the understanding of the Hebrew Bible. In 1705 the fine contextually oriented medieval commentary of Samuel b. Meir (Rashbam) was published for the first time, and as the century progressed there was renewed interest in the fruits of medieval Spanish exegesis, particularly the commentaries of David Kimhi and Abraham Ibn Ezra on the Prophets and the Writings.

The Jewish Enlightenment

The most important eighteenth-century development, however, was the emergence of the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah), a European movement characterised by the manifestation of a Jewish intelligentsia separate from, and independent of, the rabbinate. The Haskalah, which first appeared in Prussia in the 1770s and 1780s and then spread to other regions of central and Eastern Europe, seized upon improvements in the socio-economic status of the Jews and sought to further their integration into European society. The central figures of this movement encouraged openness towards aspects of European culture, especially within German-speaking lands. The exposure to

European cultural advances further exacerbated the long-standing sensitivity to the deficiencies of Jewish education and scholarship, and it resulted in calls for educational reform in general (e.g. the introduction of science and history), and renewed attention to the mastery of Hebrew and the disciplined and rigorous study of the Bible in particular.

The biblical revival spawned by the Haskalah was amply reflected in the work of Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86), the German philosopher and man of letters who was the most highly regarded Jewish intellectual of his generation, and hence the most prominent member of the early Jewish Enlightenment. In 1770 he published a commentary to Ecclesiastes, focusing in large part on the themes of divine providence and the immortality of the soul, and, influenced by the contemporary work of Robert Lowth on biblical poetry, also began a German translation of the Psalms, a project completed in 1783. Dissatisfied with the overly determined theological interpretations that both Christians and Jews had forced upon the Psalms, he offered a reading that strove to be more universalist and humanist, one that drew the meaning of the Psalms from the aesthetic qualities of the text itself. Mendelssohn's philosophical and political interests also led him to speak broadly about the nature and meaning of the Bible in *Jerusalem* (1783). In his effort to reconfigure the relationship of church and state along more politically liberal lines, Mendelssohn drew upon the political writings of John Selden and Thomas Hobbes in order to insist that the society envisaged by the Hebrew Bible was tolerant and restrained. The Bible, properly understood, commanded civil law and rituals that served to buttress social cohesion and maximise reflection on matters metaphysical and speculative, but he insisted that Scripture nowhere commanded or coerced belief per se. The biblical prohibition against idolatry, in this Hobbesian view, was actionable in biblical society precisely when – and *only* when – God was king, re-casting it as a proscription against treason. For Mendelssohn, then, the Bible served as a beacon for modern society; for him, Scripture eschewed the need for revelation of religious beliefs in favour of truths – about God and His beneficence – that were as universally known as they were accessible.

Mendelssohn contributed to the revival of Jewish Bible study through his new edition of the Pentateuch, which appeared between 1780 and 1783 under the title *Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom* (Paths of peace, 1780–3). This Hebrew Bible featured a German translation penned by Mendelssohn that displaced the traditional Aramaic and popular Judaeo-German (Yiddish) translations. Following the pattern established in pre-modern Jewish literature, however, the German translation was printed in Hebrew transliteration. His primary goal was to make the biblical text accessible to Jews more at home in German

than in Hebrew, but he was also determined to capture the literary qualities of the Hebrew original by producing an aesthetically sophisticated text. This translation headed off Christologically informed readings and interpretations of Scripture, and it explicitly rejected the textual emendations just then being introduced by J. D. Michaelis and others, dismissing them as wrongheaded and impermissible for Jews, but never addressing their central contentions. Instead, *Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom* included technical notes that endeavoured to buttress the accuracy and integrity of the traditional Masoretic Bible. This new edition of the Bible, finally, also included a commentary (the *Biur*, or explanation) that was designed to elucidate the interpretative choices assumed by the German translation and offer exegetical insights into the biblical text. Towards this end, Mendelssohn and others who assisted in the commentary – most notably Naftali Wessely (1725–1805) and Solomon Dubno (1738–1813) – drew substantially upon rabbinic literature and what they considered to be the best of medieval Jewish exegesis: Solomon b. Isaac (Rashi), Samuel b. Meir (Rashbam), Abraham Ibn Ezra and Moses b. Nahman (Ramban or Nahmanides).

This edition of the Pentateuch reflected both the modernising and traditionalist tendencies of the Jewish Enlightenment. On the one hand, the commentary was devoted to reviving the textually and contextually oriented *peshat* readings of the medieval period, adding to them new poetic and literary sensibilities of the eighteenth century. Along these lines, Mendelssohn's introduction and commentary to the Song of the Sea drew upon the work of Lowth and his explication of biblical parallelism, arguing that this literary form provided the perfect wedding of purpose and form by stressing clarity and meaning over sensual poetics of other literary traditions. On the other hand, in the face of European and Christian disdain for rabbinic interpretations of the Bible, Mendelssohn, Dubno and Wessely went out of their way to explicate the relationship of the legal and narrative writings of the Sages to the *peshuto shel miqra* – the 'plain' sense of the text; that is, they demonstrated the exegetical acuity of rabbinic midrash by underscoring their sound philological, syntactical and narrative insights. These proponents of the Jewish Enlightenment thus preserved the foundations of traditional Judaism while still embracing the literary–aesthetic sophistication of contemporary Europe. *Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom* was reprinted over two dozen times in the century that followed and exhibited considerable influence in both enlightened and traditional circles. In the century and a half that followed, however, Jews produced a dozen new German translations of the Pentateuch (the Tanakh).

The Mendelssohn Bible presaged the contours of the nineteenth-century Jewish approaches to the Hebrew Bible in three areas: (1) questions regarding

the interpretative modes of classical rabbinic literature; (2) sensitivity to biblical parochialism in the face of the modern penchant for autonomous ethics and humanistic–universalist values; and (3) the challenges posed by critical developments in biblical scholarship.

Tradition and exegesis

The integration and acculturation of Jews into European society in the nineteenth century led to a breakdown of the religious cohesion that had characterised Jewish life in the pre-modern era. The degree and nature of the Jewish commitment to traditional practices and beliefs varied considerably, as did the extent of Jewish education; and as Jews converted or abandoned the Jewish community in ever larger numbers, those who continued to identify with Judaism were aware of the need for new approaches to their texts and traditions. With more exposure to European culture and the growing religious heterogeneity among Jews, the proper role of Bible study in general, and of biblical scholarship in particular, became increasingly complicated.

One manifestation of this phenomenon was evident as early as the 1810s, when a small group of Jews studying in Berlin formed a society for the advancement of the Wissenschaft des Judentums (science of Judaism) movement, the critical–academic approach to the study of Jewish history and literature. Among the first to be enrolled in the humanistic faculties of European universities, this group had eschewed the parochial nature of traditional Jewish study but were quickly confronted with a scholarly culture that openly disparaged Jews and Judaism or considered them in thoroughly Christological terms. These Jewish scholars constituted an independent intelligentsia within German Jewish society, one that applied newly developed historical and philological tools to an unbiased and appreciative presentation of a broad range of Jewish writings. With regard to rabbinic literature, their interest extended to the role and authority of rabbinic literature in general, and the precise provenance and nature of rabbinic exegesis in particular. The early writings of Abraham Geiger (1810–74), for example, strongly derided the rabbinic handling of Scripture as artificial and distorted. Later, when he took a more positive view of rabbinic exegesis, he still viewed such exegesis in instrumental terms, wherein the Sages used their readings as a means of adapting Judaism to new contemporary realities.

In the face of growing Jewish abandonment of rabbinic traditions in general, and the reform-minded scholarly critique of rabbinic exegesis in particular, rabbinic figures with strong traditionalist leanings rose to defend the authority

of the ancient Sages. Like Mendelssohn earlier they sought to demonstrate the legitimacy of rabbinic exegesis by underscoring the sophistication and veracity of its biblical exegesis. This trend had partial roots in the teachings of the outstanding Lithuanian scholar Rabbi Elijah of Vilna (1720–97) and the students who carried on his scholarship. This Lithuanian group cultivated an interest in the Bible that roughly paralleled, and may even have been informed by, the earliest biblical writings of the Haskalah. R. Elijah attached great importance to understanding the biblical *peshat* and distinguished it clearly from rabbinic interpretation, but his attention was ultimately more attuned to the interpretative creativity and profundity of the Sages than to the biblical text itself.

It was only in the late 1830s, with growing calls to reform traditional rabbinic practices and with the appearance of Geiger's writings, that traditionalist-minded scholars (soon adopting the banner of Orthodoxy) set out to explicate the hermeneutical underpinnings of classical rabbinic interpretations. In 1839 Rabbi Jacob Zvi Meklenburg (1785–1865) published *Ha-Ketab ve-ha-Qabbalah* (The written text and (rabbinic) tradition) in order to counter the claims that classical rabbinic readings of the Hebrew Bible were foisted unnaturally upon Scripture. While this commentary focused somewhat on justifying rabbinic interpretation, it was devoted mainly to an explication of *peshuto shel miqra* (the plain sense of the biblical text). As such, it offered an excellent anthology of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century *peshat* exegesis, including material drawn from both the Haskalah and R. Elijah of Vilna, thereby showcasing the modern reinvigoration of Jewish Bible study. Responding to similar challenges and writing with polemic anti-reform intent, Rabbi Meir Leibush b. Yehiel Michel (Malbim; 1809–79) approached the relationship of the Bible and its classical rabbinic interpretations in a far more systematic and substantive fashion. He set out to demonstrate that the Sages had a deep knowledge of Hebrew that included a firm grasp of grammatical principles, a sensitivity to the subtlest of differences among apparently synonymous nouns and verbs and an appreciation of biblical style and idiom, all of which he tried to demonstrate in great detail. In 1860 he published an edition of the *Sifra*, the early rabbinic midrash to Leviticus, which interpolated the relevant biblical verses at the head of each rabbinic segment, and to which he wrote a commentary. When Malbim then published Leviticus with the full text of the *Sifra* and accompanied by the same commentary, he had tellingly collapsed the distinction between biblical and rabbinic exegesis. Between 1875 and 1878 he published a Hebrew Bible that extended this approach to the remainder of the Pentateuch, dedicated to

narrowing any perceived gap between the biblical text and rabbinic traditions of interpretation.

As the challenges to rabbinic Judaism spread to Eastern Europe, the elite rabbinic circles of Lithuania and Belorussia also contributed to this rabbinic approach to biblical exegesis. One of its leading figures, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin (1817–93), penned *Ha-Ameq Dabar* (Deepening the word, 1879–80), a commentary to the Pentateuch which sought to uncover the profound meaning of the biblical word by engaging Scripture and rabbinic literature in ways that underscored their independent literary qualities. Berlin spoke incisively about the limitless interpretative possibilities inherent in the biblical text, pointing at the same time to the independent and creative readings offered in classical rabbinic exegesis. His nephew, Barukh Ha-Levi Epstein (1860–1942), contributed further to this modern traditionalist concern in his *Torah Temimah* (The complete Torah, 1904), an edition of the Pentateuch that offered an annotated anthology of rabbinic readings of Scripture. The central claim, predicated once again on the exegetical perspicacity of the Sages, was that only by conjoining the written and oral traditions could one attain a truly complete or whole Torah.

A markedly different traditionalist approach was taken by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–88), the prominent and outspoken leader of German Orthodoxy in his lengthy German commentary to the Pentateuch *Der Pentateuch, übersetzt und erläutert* (1867–78). Hirsch did not believe that the biblical text could properly serve as the exegetical grounds from which the corpus of rabbinic teachings was derived. He allowed only that the Bible served as a kind of a mnemonic primer that elicited the particulars of the Oral Torah, and insisted that this was possible only in the presence of a revealed tradition that Moses and the Israelites had independently received. Instead, highly sensitive to the prevailing European Protestant depreciation of Judaism, Hirsch used his commentary to demonstrate the thoroughly integrated spiritual and ethical worldview of the Torah. Utilising a mix of creative – many would say dubious – philology, Hirsch produced what could best be described as a theosophical–homiletical commentary which stressed biblical symbolism and mined biblical narratives and strictures for their sublime moral teachings.

Philosophical considerations

As the example of Hirsch indicated, nineteenth-century Jews had to consider the relevance of the Bible in the light of contemporary theological and philosophical ideas. The Jewish engagement with European intellectual life

occurred just as German Idealism came to dominate continental thought, such that Jewish thinkers were immediately and forcefully confronted with philosophical and religious systems that championed religious and ethical autonomy as well as an ideational historicism. These notions challenged the ways in which Jews understood their biblical traditions, attacking the very notion of divine imperative, trivialising biblically rooted ritual and undermining Jewish historical self-understanding, not to mention contemporary relevance.

Mendelssohn, as we have mentioned above, insisted on universal accessibility to religious truths, particularly those necessary for salvation, and in this sense he fully embraced the enlightened commitment to autonomous religiosity. The religious heteronomy evident in the Bible, he suggested, was limited exclusively to laws and rituals, which served only as a valuable if not indispensable prod towards metaphysical reflection. The same abiding universalism led Mendelssohn to reject the new historicist thinking by flatly dismissing the possibility of historical progress, especially the idea of an ongoing refinement of essential religious truths. Two generations later, Salomon Ludwig Steinheim (1789–1866) critiqued Mendelssohn and completely inverted his claims, arguing that the Bible was to be read as a revelation of beliefs and doctrines concerning God, with its legal strictures serving only as ancillary and symbolic features of biblical religion. Like Mendelssohn, however, he wanted to shield what he perceived as the essence of biblical revelation from historicist interpretation.

In the Galician province of the Habsburg empire, Nahman Krochmal (1785–1840) chose not to dismiss modern historicist ideas, but opted instead to internalise their presuppositions while subverting their anti-Jewish orientation. Adopting the historicist discourse popularised by German thinkers such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, Krochmal spoke of God as Absolute Spirit, affirming its transcendence and its simultaneously evolving self-consciousness and ideational availability to mankind. Krochmal, naturally, posited that this understanding of God and the world, wherein the gulf between the divine and human realms are properly bridged, served as the metaphysical underpinnings of the Bible, and was understood and further articulated by rabbinic and medieval interpreters of the text. Most importantly, he argued that the very elements of the Bible dismissed by European and Christian philosophers and scholars as unacceptably parochial – its national exclusivity and ritual commandments – ensured the unique spiritual and historical survival of the Jewish nation, effectively turning Christian supersessionism and philosophical historicism on its head.

The most outstanding Jewish philosopher of the late nineteenth century, Hermann Cohen (1842–1918), also reinterpreted the Bible in light of modern philosophical thinking, and he did so in far more universalist terms. Embracing the Kantian notion that morality and ethics served as the true metaphysical heart of religion, Cohen devoted *Die Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums* (1919) to a demonstration of the rational–ethical spirit that informed the Hebrew Bible. This ancient text, in Cohen's presentation, was hardly the narrow, parochial document that inculcated submissiveness to the will of the divine. Rather, contrary to the claims of its modern critics, it embodied the most fundamental of universal imperatives towards self- and societal perfection, focusing and encouraging humans in their duty to fulfil their charge as autonomous moral agents.

Responses to critical scholarship

The exposure of Jews to the world of European and particularly German arts and letters came precisely at the moment when the study of the Bible began to flourish as an academically distinct and increasingly critical-minded discipline. Early in the nineteenth century there were a small number of Jews who studied directly with scholars such as de Wette, and even beyond the confines of the academy there were others – the number is unclear – who gained some minimal exposure to the burgeoning field. Even where the knowledge of contemporary biblical scholarship was evident, however, Jews of the first half of the nineteenth century took a pronouncedly cautious and conservative approach. Following Mendelssohn, some Jewish writers of the early nineteenth century criticised Christian scholars for taking uncalled-for liberties in proposing textual emendations, as for example one reviewer who reprimanded Gesenius for showing insufficient respect for the *textus receptus*. Along these lines, gifted scholars such as Wolf Heidenheim (1757–1832), Solomon Frensdorff (1803–80) and Seligman Baer (1825–97) continued to dedicate themselves to the preservation and systematisation of the Masoretic text (MT) and its apparatus, giving no consideration to the new critical trends taking shape.

Perhaps more telling was the fact that even Jewish scholars who took the advances in biblical criticism seriously exhibited a deep-seated wariness. With regard to textual criticism, this was evident in the writings of Samuel David Luzzatto (1800–65), a teacher in the rabbinical seminary in Padua and perhaps the finest and most creative biblical scholar of his generation. Luzzatto was an outstanding Hebrew grammarian and philologist, and in countless essays,

letters and a few commentaries – written largely in Hebrew – he used this mastery of biblical language to propose dozens of emendations in the text of the Prophets and Writings. These included corrections of orthography and verbal tenses, as well as suggestions regarding the replacement or deletion of words. And yet Luzzatto's scholarship remained thoroughly conservative, affirming in distinctly Jewish terms that textual criticism, even cautiously employed, would not apply to the Pentateuch due to its special preservation in the hands of trained scribes. Even with regard to the Prophets and Writings, he insisted that scholars exhaust every means of explaining the MT, and that alternative readings could be broached when 'the [biblical] language cannot be properly interpreted without emendation, and that with the emendation, it is suitably interpreted, and no difficulty remains'.[1]

The same cautiousness was evident in the early nineteenth century with regard to the questions of the authorship and dating of biblical texts. In his *Mavo el Miqraei Qodesh* (Introduction to Holy Scriptures, 1810), Judah Leib Ben Zeev (1764–1811) wrote a series of introductory essays to the individual books of the Prophets and Writings which drew upon the work of J. G. Eichhorn. These essays highlighted the historical and literary features of each biblical book, and while Ben Zeev broached some critical notions regarding authorship – suggesting, for example, that 1 Samuel 17 was the product of two documents only later combined – he disingenuously distanced himself from critical conclusions by writing that Jews needed to be mindful of their textual traditions and could not heed such critical views. Others who took up some of Eichhorn's contentions regarding the authorship and redaction of various prophetic books attempted to refute them. These early nineteenth-century writings, written in Hebrew and addressed to Jewish readers, assumed the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and avoided any critical discussion regarding its composition and dating.

The complexity of Jewish attitudes towards biblical criticism is well attested in the writings of those who formed the first generation of scholars who identified with the newly articulated Wissenschaft des Judentums. The small loosely affiliated group of Jews who took up the critical–academic approach to Jewish history and literature had studied or were well acquainted with some of the finest German Protestant Bible scholars, and yet they largely ignored the Hebrew Bible as a subject of independent and direct study or engaged it rather carefully and in circumscribed ways. Isaac Jost (1793–1860) conceived of his multi-volume *Geschichte der Israeliten* (1820–8) as a history of the Jews from

[1] Letter from Luzzatto to Samuel Leib Goldenberg in *Kerem Hemed* 2 (1836), pp. 130–1.

the Hasmonean period, and only turned back to the biblical era and its texts in the supplementary material of the third volume. There, Jost drew upon de Wette's fragmentary hypothesis and identified dozens of fragments that comprised the Pentateuch and which were redacted in the exilic period; he also portrayed the redaction of those fragments as a transformative process wherein Jews moved from a law-centred constitution to the God-centred faith that would become the true essence of Judaism. A few short years later, when Jost published his one-volume *Allgemeine Geschichte des israelitischen Volkes* (1832), he adopted a far more ambivalent view of critical and conservative approaches to the Pentateuch, and generally assumed the integrity of the text. Jost effectively bracketed the critical questions, suggesting that the teachings and spirit of the biblical text were ultimately more important than its historical provenance.

Far more typical of these Wissenschaft scholars was Leopold Zunz (1793–1886), a central figure among these independent and critically minded Jewish scholars. In his *Die gottesdientstlichen Vorträge der Juden* (1832), Zunz wrote in a historical-critical vein regarding Psalms and Chronicles, positing that the latter was written by the author of Ezra and Nehemiah and that the three texts originally formed one unit that was redacted in the third century BCE. In Zunz's hands the late redaction of biblical texts underscored the ongoing ways in which Jews grappled with and responded to their historically changing circumstances, thereby demonstrating the vibrant and organic development of Judaism as it unfolded in the context of the synagogue. Similar observations regarding the late dating of sections of Isaiah or Psalms were made by his contemporaries Krochmal and Solomon Rapoport (1790–1867). Such discussions of the late dating of certain biblical books, however, reinforce the fact that up until the middle of the nineteenth century Jews engaged these issues only in limited ways, and ignored or avoided questions regarding the authorship and redaction of the Pentateuch.

The first significant step in the development of Jewish biblical scholarship came just after mid-century in the important and far-reaching work of Abraham Geiger. In his *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel* (1857) Geiger argued that the formation of the Hebrew Bible was bound up with the history of the Jews themselves. At one level this process was manifest in the ascription of late books to earlier eras and authors, which served as a means of justifying or legitimising certain developments through historical projection. As the biblical text began to crystallise, however, a different method was needed and, on this count, Geiger drew attention to the way in which pre-tannaitic scholars utilised a biblical text that was still somewhat fluid, a phenomenon that he

substantiated by pointing to other versions of Scripture that emerged in late antiquity. In short, Geiger argued that Jewish scholars of antiquity rendered the Bible relevant for Jews through textual revision; that is, ancient scribes took advantage of a fluid biblical text in order to distance it from ideas deemed harmful, and in order to make the Bible commensurate with contemporary beliefs.

In 1862 Julius Popper (1822–84) published a study of the biblical account of the Tabernacle in which he pointed to the composite nature and late post-exilic redaction of portions of Exodus and Leviticus. Popper's questioning of the notion of a *Grundschrift* then dominant was quickly noted by Abraham Kuenen, who later credited Popper with helping to reshape his – and, according to Kuenen, Karl Heinrich Graf's – analysis of the Hexateuch. Before the decade was out the German–British Marcus Kalisch (1825–85) published a thick two-volume commentary on Leviticus in which he endeavoured to show that the laws of Leviticus must have originated after the enactments of Deuteronomy (and hence later than the seventh century BCE), and that the texts displayed a distinct spiritual and religious development consonant with the political history of the period. Although the writings of Popper and Kalisch were timely, substantive and important, their impact on Jewish scholarship was virtually nil, and unlike Kuenen they remained marginal to European scholarly discourse. Geiger's work alone elicited the attention of fellow Jews, and it was also one of the first contributions to merit the sustained attention – and, not incidentally, stiff criticism – of European Bible scholars.

In order to properly appreciate the limited ways in which Jews engaged the critical scholarship of the mid-nineteenth century, it is important to take a broad view of the historical and intellectual conditions of the time. From the perspective of the 1860s it is evident that Jewish scholars who promoted the new textual and historical methods of Wissenschaft des Judentums were generally far more interested in the Jewish texts of late antiquity and the medieval period than in the Hebrew Bible; and even when they did turn to the Bible, they focused less on the biblical text or its world than on the textual and interpretative *reception* of the biblical text, as for example in their recovery of the long-forgotten medieval *peshat* exegesis of northern France. There are numerous and overlapping reasons for this: nineteenth-century Jewish scholars were motivated, first and foremost, to counter the harshly negative portrayal of post-biblical Judaism, just as they may have been wary of challenging the Christian appropriations of the Old Testament too directly. To this one may add that reform-minded Jews who tried to interpret Judaism in distinctly religious and spiritual terms had little interest in the abundant

legalism of the Pentateuch, nor in the national–ethnic themes of the Prophets. Nineteenth-century Europe was still largely conservative, and the new trends in biblical scholarship were perceived in many official quarters as antithetical to religion and to the stability of civil society; since Jews remained politically and socially vulnerable, they prudently avoided anything that impugned the divinity or historicity of Scripture. There were, moreover, institutional realities that kept Jews from biblical scholarship. The fact was that the significant advances of nineteenth-century biblical scholarship were largely the product of the theological faculties of European universities, faculties which neither could nor would nurture Jewish students, not to mention potential faculty. There was a small handful of Jews who, beginning around mid-century, obtained faculty appointments in Hebrew and Semitic languages and literature, but none would receive an academic position focusing on the Hebrew Bible until the twentieth century. Taken together, these factors reinforced a reality in which Jewish and Christian European study of the Hebrew Bible took place in separate and vastly different spheres. Although Jews were reading and absorbing the writing of their non-Jewish contemporaries, their own scholarship was very much an internally directed endeavour, framed in terms of Jewish traditions and sensibilities.

Given the strongly confessional nature and the disparities in Jewish and Christian biblical scholarship, it was hardly surprising to find that Jewish writings on the New Testament also bore a distinct approach. In a series of lectures published in 1864 Geiger challenged Christian New Testament scholarship by claiming Jesus for Judaism and locating him historically in the Pharisaic school. The legal issues at the heart of the Sadducee–Pharisee dispute, in his view, shed important light on contradictions and variants in the Gospels, and as such, he put forth a powerful argument for using rabbinic literature in the elucidation of the New Testament. Geiger's views, clearly attributing to rabbinic Judaism a positive and even progressive historical role, were eagerly echoed by fellow Jews; Christian scholars, much to his growing irritation, denounced, dismissed or otherwise ignored his contentions.

1870s to the early twenty-first century

The period from the late nineteenth century through the early twenty-first was one of significant change as Jewish scholars engaged more and more with the biblical text. The secondary but honoured position of the Bible expanded, and non-Jewish critical scholarship began to have a much broader and more significant influence on Jewish study of the Hebrew Bible. This scholarship

reacted to, and eventually was greatly influenced by, the contributions of Wellhausen and his generation in the areas of text criticism, source criticism and the history of ancient Israelite religion. Although his models did not win the day, especially in conservative Protestant circles, they were deeply influential throughout Europe. The fundamental question, then, was the extent to which Jewish scholars were influenced by the methods and approaches found in Wellhausen; this, in turn, depended greatly on their access to university education, both as students and as teachers.

European Jewish scholarship

Staunch Jewish traditionalists rejected all the arguments put forth by Wellhausen and even more moderate critical models. They continued to see the Bible as perfectly transmitted, the Pentateuch as an indivisible text of one authorship and provenance, and Judaism as a religion revealed whole, which had experienced no significant further development. Thus, many scholars continued to write works that ignored the German critical school, and produced scholarship that showed remarkable continuity with earlier modes of Jewish study. Other scholars recognised the need to address critical approaches, even if only to disprove them. David Zvi Hoffman (1843–1921), an important leader of the Orthodox German Jewry, published *Die wichtigsten Instanzen gegen die Graf–Wellhausensche Hypothese* (1903, 1916), a forcefully argued set of polemical works, challenging both the existence of sources and the late date of the Priestly material. The Hildesheimer Seminary in Berlin, where Hoffman taught and later served as rector, was unusual in that it incorporated the Bible into the curriculum, and in the fact that many of its students were also enrolled at the University of Berlin, where they came into contact with pentateuchal criticism. His starting point – and end point – was that 'the entire Torah is true, holy and given by God – every single word was written by divine command' and the rabbinic tradition is correct and authoritative; as a result of this premise, his work had no influence on general biblical scholarship.

In German commentaries to the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, *Das Buch Leviticus, übersetzt und erklärt* (1905–6) and *Das Buch Deuteronomium, übersetzt und erklärt* (1913–22), Hoffman combined elements of Haskalah and Wissenschaft scholarship with Orthodox apologia. Academically trained and well versed in contemporary European biblical scholarship, Hoffmann was as concerned with defending the integrity of the Bible as displaying its ultimate concordance with rabbinic oral traditions. Like Malbim, he devoted a

considerable amount of scholarly attention to the study of *midrash halakhah* but the methodological conclusions he drew were different. Hoffmann allowed that in many instances rabbinic traditions either preceded or appeared concurrently with their scripturally based articulation in midrashic literature and, as such, could not be independently derived from the biblical text. Nevertheless, the task of the modern exegete was to connect the Bible with tradition, even if retrospectively. Hoffmann's biblical writings, however, went beyond this issue and yielded an impressive scholarly range, incorporating linguistic and scientific insights alongside philosophy and comparative anthropology.

The important German Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz (1817–91), who taught at the Breslau Seminary, was also known for his biblical scholarship and his many textual emendations. He wrote German commentaries on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes. He accepted some critical observations concerning the dating of biblical books, yet he strongly rejected Wellhausen's edifice, believing that most critical Protestant scholars were poorly trained in Hebrew and were interested, for their own anti-Semitic theological reasons, in diminishing the importance of the Pentateuch. Most other Jewish scholars of the late nineteenth century continued to ignore critical study of the Bible, and when they did express interest in biblical studies, they clung to the earlier model of Wissenschaft des Judentums by publishing lost manuscripts of medieval biblical commentary, that is, by dealing with the reception of the Bible rather than the Bible itself or the history of its composition.

Hoffmann's polemical stance would later be popularised and carried forward for an English audience in the 1929–36 publication of *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* by J. H. Hertz (1872–1946), the chief rabbi of the British empire. This volume served as the standard Torah of the Jewish community for home and synagogue for over half a century, and would inform the attitude of much of world Jewry. He selectively cited conservative scholars such as the German Rudolf Kittel (whose anti-Wellhausian position was appreciated by Jewish biblical scholars) and the British S. R. Driver when they supported his position, while rejecting more radical positions, noting: 'My conviction that the criticism of the Pentateuch associated with the name of Wellhausen is a perversion of history and a desecration of religion, is unshaken.'[2] His many 'Additional Notes' at the end of each biblical book polemicised against predominant critical ideas of the day, especially concerning the existence of pentateuchal sources, and the Bible's dependence on ancient Near Eastern works.

[2] J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1938), p. vii.

Although most Jewish Bible scholars were reticent to adopt many of the prevalent Continental ideas concerning source criticism and the history of Israelite religion, which they believed reflected an anti-Jewish bias, they were open to text criticism of the Tanakh. Two factors facilitated Jewish engagement with text criticism, while rejecting source criticism: some medieval precedents existed for the textual criticism of the Bible, and it could be engaged without the deeply theological, Protestant suppositions concerning source criticism. Felix Perles (1874–1933) and Hirsch Perez Chajes (1876–1927), who towards the end of his life served as chief rabbi of Vienna and wrote on the Bible, the New Testament and rabbinic literature, engaged extensively in text criticism, all the while criticising their Christian counterparts for offering emendations that indicated a lack of feel for biblical Hebrew diction and style.

The German scholar and liberal rabbi Benno Jacob (1862–1945), author of significant essays and commentaries on Genesis and Exodus, was one of the few scholars of this period who did not believe that the Torah originated with Moses or from the Mosaic period, although he believed in a type of unified spiritual origin of the Torah, and did not accept Wellhausen's system. He attempted to champion the Jewish study of the Bible, bemoaning in 1906 the 'dismal state' of Jewish biblical scholarship: 'We should not, for dogmatic reasons, leave Biblical scholarship to Protestant theologians; we need unbiased scholarship of our own,' and, writing in 1933: 'Our times urgently needed a scholarly, independent Jewish commentary which would remove the disgrace from our community that, for the scholarly explanation of its own and holiest book it should be wholly dependent on Christian commentaries.'[3] His commentaries emphasised that the Torah, although of human authorship, had to be appreciated as an organic whole, an approach that he underscored through the repetition of key numbers and other stylistic features. His interpretive framework suggests that the Bible is semi-poetic, and is deeply rooted in the Semitic way of thinking, which creates meanings through dichotomies. His perspectives would have a significant influence on the Buber–Rosenzweig translation, and on the scholarship of Umberto (Moshe David) Cassuto (1883–1951), though not on the broader world of biblical scholarship.

Although Jews were welcome to study Semitics, and in some cases Bible, at European universities, they were not welcome to teach Bible, which was typically taught in Catholic or Protestant theological faculties. David Heinrich Mueller (1846–1912) taught Semitics in Vienna, as did Meyer Lambert

[3] Cited in Robert S. Schine, *Jewish Thought Adrift: Max Weiner (1892–1950)* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), p. 15.

(1863–1930) in France. Felix Perles, whose *Analekten* shows a brilliant biblical mind, especially in text criticism, was appointed honorary professor of modern Hebrew and Aramaic literature at Königsberg in 1924, but this was an unpaid position in post-biblical literature. Neither Chajes nor Benno Jacob had university appointments. Although the Italian scholar Umberto Cassuto later taught biblical studies at the Hebrew University, he was employed by Italian universities to teach Hebrew and Jewish History. Jewish scholars such as the Semiticist Jakob Barth (1851–1914) were nevertheless very involved in several controversies concerning the Bible, especially in taking the Bible's side in the *Bibel und Babel* controversy, which began with Friedrich Delitzsch's suggestion that the Bible was derivative of, and inferior to, Babylonian civilisation.

The lack of proper institutional homes for Jewish Bible scholars continued to impede the development of Jewish biblical studies throughout the twentieth century. The Irish scholar Jacob Weingreen (1907–95), who studied and then taught at Trinity College Dublin, was highly exceptional; his obituary stated that he 'was the first Jew to hold the chair of Hebrew in a Protestant university in a Catholic city'. The seminaries, which were at best ambivalent towards critical study, did not foster the growth of this study. Thus, until the establishment of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the integration of Jewish scholars into American biblical scholarship, Jewish scholars had few options for academic appointments. With the exception of the Hildesheimer Seminary, noted above, the emphasis in Orthodox seminaries was almost exclusively on talmudic and later rabbinic literature, and sometimes on biblical commentary. This was true in many of the more liberal seminaries as well.

The German Jewish community may have been on a trajectory to produce serious mainstream biblical scholarship, but this was prevented by the rise of Nazism and its tragic aftermath, and the traditions of Jewish scholarship were further eroded by the Iron Curtain. The last great work of biblical scholarship was the ambitious and daring collaborative effort of two German Jews, Martin Buber (1878–1965) and Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929), who published a translation of the entire Hebrew Bible between 1926 and 1962. Eschewing the functional aim of existing translations and their attempt to make the Bible accessible to Europeans via another, more intimately familiar vernacular, these scholars set out to produce a German translation that captured the sound and syntactic structure – the 'feel' – of the Hebrew Bible, no matter how awkward and opaque that might appear to the native reader. The text they produced never wavered in its respect for the power of the Hebrew original, averring that the meanings of the biblical text were inseparable from its word choices and originally oral cadences.

America

Although Jews first arrived in North America in the seventeenth century, it was only in the nineteenth, with the migration of Jews from Germany and then from Eastern Europe, that Jews began to contribute seriously to the study of the Hebrew Bible. German Jews brought with them the religious customs and divisions of Europe (e.g. between Reform and Orthodox Judaism), though Conservative Judaism, influenced by German Historical Judaism, attracted Eastern European Jews and developed as a uniquely American phenomenon in the early twentieth century.

As English became the mother tongue of more Jews in the USA and elsewhere, American Jewish scholars and rabbis expressed the need for a translation more appropriate than the King James Bible. The latter half of the nineteenth century thus saw the appearance of a handful of English translations, many of them consciously retaining the stylistic and literary features of the King James Version. A plan to publish a new American Jewish Bible was first devised in the 1890s, and, after innumerable setbacks and complications, *The Holy Scriptures according to the Masoretic Text* was published by the Jewish Publication Society in 1917. This translation, produced under the able leadership of Cyrus Adler (1863–1940) and Max Margolis (1866–1932), was actually a revision of the 1885 English Revised Version of the Old Testament, but one that would, as Adler put it, 'remove all un-Jewish and anti-Jewish phrases, expressions, renderings, [and] usages'.[4] By the 1950s, with new Protestant and Catholic Bibles published or being prepared, the need for a better English translation commensurate with Jewish readings was once again felt. With Harry Orlinsky (1908–92) as its editor, the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) undertook a fresh translation of the Hebrew Bible, which appeared between 1962 and 1985 and was published under the self-consciously Hebraic title *Tanakh*. This version has become something of a modern standard for English-speaking Jewry, serving as the basic reference in religious, educational and scholarly circles. The *Tanakh* represented the first time the Bible was translated anew from Hebrew to English by Jews, rather than a revision or 'Judaisation' of a previous English translation. The official role played by the JPS in publishing its Bibles and the care that it took in utilising scholars from all the major Jewish denominations may explain the relative paucity of scholarly English Bible translations, especially when contrasted with the earlier situation in Germany.

[4] Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture 1888–1988* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 104.

As American Jews turned to institution building, they too considered the role and nature of Bible study in their movements and seminaries. The late nineteenth-century Conservative perspective concerning biblical studies was reflected in the statements of Sabato Morais, co-founder of the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in New York in 1886 and the eventual academic home of Conservative Judaism. Morais favoured teaching Bible through the Jewish medieval commentators rather than critical scholars who 'deny Moses the authorship of the Pentateuch, make our patriarchs sheer myths, our priests tyrannical egoists, our Ezra a pretender, our progenitors unmitigated dupes'.[5] This approach became more trenchant after the 1903 lecture of Morais's successor, Solomon Schechter, titled 'Higher Criticism – Higher Anti-Semitism'.

> Wellhausen's Prolegomena and History are *teeming with aperçus* full of venom against Judaism, and you cannot wonder that he was rewarded by one of the highest orders which the Prussian Government had to bestow. . . . But this Higher anti-Semitism has now reached its climax when every discovery of recent years is called to bear witness against us and to accuse us of spiritual larceny. . . . The Bible is our sole *raison d'être*, and it is just this which the Higher anti-Semitism is seeking to destroy, denying all our claims for the past, and leaving us without hope for the future.[6]

This essay would remain extremely influential within the Conservative movement and Seminary. This was ironic, since that movement pioneered the critical study of rabbinic texts, and Schechter himself reflected some openness to criticism, suggesting (unlike Hoffmann) that critical approaches and traditional answers are equally fallible. Some texts from the Prophets and Writings were taught using critical methods at the JTS, although the Pentateuch was typically handled in a far more conservative manner down to the late 1960s. The highly creative scholar of Bible and North-west Semitic texts H. L. Ginsberg (1903–90), who arrived at the JTS in 1936, initially introduced the methods of the important Israeli scholar Yehezkel Kaufmann to his students, though later in life his position became more closely aligned with Wellhausen. Ginsberg was well known for his linguistic brilliance and creative emendations for the entire Tanakh, and was the prime force behind the JPS *Neviim* (Prophets) translation (1978).

[5] David S. Sperling, 'Biblical Studies at Jewish Theological Seminary', unpublished 2011 address at the Columbia Bible Seminar.

[6] Solomon Schechter, *Seminary Addresses and Other Papers* (Cincinnati: Ark Publishing, 1915), pp. 36–7.

The Reform position evolved over time. The movement's 1855 (Cleveland) Platform stated: 'The *Bible* as delivered to us by our fathers and as now in our possession is of immediate divine origin as the standard of our religion,'[7] and thus was not open to the critical developments on the Continent; the same was true of German Reform. However, the highly influential 1885 Pittsburgh Platform also stated: 'We hold that the modern discoveries of scientific researches in the domain of nature and history are not antagonistic to the doctrines of Judaism, the *Bible* reflecting the primitive ideas of its own age, and a time clothing its conception of Divine Providence and Justice dealing with man in miraculous narratives.'[8]

This opened up American Jewish biblical scholarship to Wellhausen and others, as reflected by Kaufmann Kohler (1843–1926) and Julian Morgenstern (1881–1976). Both served as president of Hebrew Union College and encouraged critical Bible study. In Orthodox seminaries in the United States, teaching the Bible, especially the Torah, from a critical perspective has been, and remains, taboo.

As in Europe, Jews in North America were not welcome to teach in the Protestant seminaries, and colleges and universities also remained closed. Many colleges did not veer far from their denominational origins, and many discriminated against Jewish students and faculty. This was especially true of most of the Ivy League institutions, and as late as 1945 the president of Dartmouth College could say that it 'is a Christian college founded for the Christianization of its students'.[9] Until the middle of the twentieth century there were only three exceptions: Johns Hopkins, the University of Pennsylvania and, for a brief period, Columbia University. In 1883 Paul Haupt, a philo-Semitic Assyriologist and biblical scholar, initiated the Semitics Seminar at Johns Hopkins University, the first true research university in the United States. His first Ph.D. student was Cyrus Adler, who also taught briefly at Hopkins, but he soon left the field to contribute to American Jewish life. Although few Jewish students enrolled at Hopkins, those who did felt comfortable, in part because of the philo-Semitism of William Foxwell Albright (1891–1971). The University of Pennsylvania, founded by the deist Benjamin Franklin as the first American secular college,

[7] K. Kohler, 'David Einhorn, the Uncompromising Champion of Reform: A Biographical Essay', *Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis* XIX (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1910), p. 250.

[8] Walter Jacob, 'The Influence of the Pittsburgh Platform on Reform Halakhah and Biblical Study', in Walter Jacob (ed.), *The Changing World of Reform Judaism: The Pittsburgh Platform in Retrospect* (Pittsburgh: Rodef Shalom Congregation, 1985), pp. 25–39 at p. 35.

[9] Cited in Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What Is the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009), p. 176.

was also especially open to Jewish scholars and students of the Hebrew Bible. It was a major force in Assyriology as early as the late nineteenth century, and Morris Jastrow (1861–1921), an undergraduate alumnus, was appointed as a professor of Semitics there as early as 1891, teaching Assyriology and Bible. Later, the Assyriologist and biblical scholar E. A. Speiser was hired there. Finally, Richard James Horatio Gottheil (1862–1936), educated in Leipzig, taught Semitic languages at Columbia University in the late nineteenth century, and also served as president of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL). His presidential address of 1904, 'Some Early Jewish Biblical Criticism', reflected his claim that Jewish biblical scholars can be part of mainstream scholarship while remaining rooted in earlier biblical scholarship. His interests later shifted to Zionism, and in the twentieth century Columbia University adopted a policy that was less favourable to Jewish students and faculty.

The most creative Jewish biblical scholar of this era was Arnold Ehrlich (1848–1919), who emigrated to New York in 1874. A brilliant linguist, his *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel* (7 vols., 1908–14) is still widely cited. Ehrlich was an eccentric man, who could not find an institutional home: Protestant-dominated universities would not hire him as a Jew, and Jewish institutions were suspicious of him because he had briefly converted to Christianity when he worked with Franz Delitzsch in Europe and collaborated with the latter's New Testament translation. He did influence biblical scholarship indirectly in the early twentieth century, serving as a private consultant and tutor of many leading scholars.

The institutional realities concerning Jewish and biblical studies in the USA resulted in the founding of Philadelphia's Dropsie College in 1907, from the bequest of Moses Dropsie 'to found a college in the City of Philadelphia for the study of Hebrew and Cognate Learning, to be open to students without any restriction as to creed, color, or sex, and where the tuition was to be free, but the Governors and Faculty were to be of the Jewish faith'.[10] It was an important centre for academic Jewish studies for much of the twentieth century, and it served as one of the premier places where Jewish biblical scholars could teach and be trained; much of this biblical scholarship appeared in the pages of its prestigious journal, *The Jewish Quarterly Review*.

The situation began to change shortly after the Second World War. Brandeis University, founded in 1948 by the Jewish community as a non-sectarian university, began training students in biblical and Semitic studies, especially under

[10] Cyrus Adler, *I Have Considered the Days* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1945), pp. 273–4.

Cyrus Gordon (1908–2001), Nahum Sarna (1923–2005) and Michael Fishbane (b. 1943), all of whom were open to modern critical methods. At the same time the University of Pennsylvania continued as a major centre; the A. M. Ellis Chair of Hebrew and Semitic Languages and Literatures was established in 1954, and was held by E. A. Speiser (1902–65), Moshe Greenberg (1928–2010) and Jeffrey Tigay (b. 1941); they trained a disproportionate number of Jewish biblical scholars who held major positions when these became available to Jews. Speiser explicated Genesis in the Anchor Bible series (1964) using explicit source-critical sigla, and had a broad influence on both the Jewish and the general community interested in biblical studies; he was the primary figure in the New Jewish Publication Society Bible translation (*Torah*, 1962, along with Orlinsky and Ginsberg), which nevertheless claimed to follow the Hebrew Masoretic text. Speiser also translated the Akkadian texts in Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Related to the Old Testament* (first edition 1950). He considered the Bible to be the pinnacle of ancient Near Eastern creativity. Columbia University's Moshe Held (1924–84), educated at the Hebrew University, Hopkins and Chicago, began teaching at Columbia in 1966, where he trained many students, emphasising comparative lexicography.

As part of the foment and openness of the 1960s in the United States, the Ph.D. programmes related to biblical studies at Yale and Harvard Universities, which previously had few Jewish students, took in a significant number of Jews, and these students, realising that the American academy was becoming more open to Jewish professors of Bible, opted to take the Ph.D. In part, this was connected to the shift of biblical studies from Christian studies at American universities to a history of religion and ancient Near Eastern studies perspective. The positive attitude of several philo-Semitic professors at these institutions, especially Frank Moore Cross, Jr. (b. 1921) at Harvard, and Yale's Jewish professors Franz Rosenthal (1914–2003), J. J. Finkelstein (1922–74) and William W. Hallo (b. 1928), as well as Marvin Pope (1916–97), who had a strong interest in traditional Jewish biblical interpretation, facilitated this development. Their Jewish students found congenial homes at many leading colleges, universities and seminaries, just as those institutions were opening up to Jewish studies and building programmes that invariably included one or more positions in Bible. This coterie of university-trained critical scholars, with varying and differing Jewish commitments and perspectives, has contributed to many areas of biblical scholarship, and they have trained much of the current generation of biblical scholars, both Jewish and non-Jewish. These scholars all utilise the main methods of biblical studies and have found different ways of reconciling these principles with Jewish belief. The integration of

Jewish scholars into biblical studies in the United States was also reflected in the role that Jews played as presidents of the SBL from 1880 to the present.

Israel

The Hebrew University in Jerusalem, whose cornerstone was laid in 1918 and which opened on Mount Scopus in 1925, should have become the natural place for the critical study of the Hebrew Bible for Jews. Perles was a strong advocate for this; in his 1927 address 'Why Do we Need Biblical Studies' at the dedication of the Institute for Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University, he noted that biblical studies is the foundation for all of Jewish studies, that the Bible must be explained in the light of science and Judaism. He observed, however, that 'To my great regret, I must admit that the number of Jewish scholars who work in this field [modern biblical studies] is still very small. I see in this a great embarrassment and a great loss to Israel.'[11] In Israel the Bible was viewed as the national Jewish book, much of which describes events transpiring in the land of Israel; for many years university scholars held weekly colloquia at the prime minister's house. In its initial years the Hebrew University was deeply conflicted about the place of biblical studies in the curriculum, unsure whether a critical or a traditional Jewish perspective should be taught. A compromise suggested hiring two professors, one teaching each perspective. As a result, Bible did not find a place in the first decades of the university, though the distinguished American Bible scholar and text critic Max Margolis, the main translator of the 1917 Jewish Publication Society English Bible, taught there its first year. Chajes was considered for a position, but died in 1927, and Perles taught in the department for one year.

In 1932 the university established a secondary department called Miqra, the less-used Jewish rabbinic name for the Tanakh, and it was upgraded to a full-fledged department only in 1940. N. H. Tur-Sinai (born Harry Torczyner, 1886–1973), a highly idiosyncratic scholar, was considered too critical for the Bible chair, and was thus appointed to the Hebrew language department instead, though he was allowed to teach a course on Job in the Miqra department. The university also hired Moshe Zvi Segal, a scholar very critical of the entire source-critical approach to the Torah. He was joined later by Moshe David (Umberto) Cassuto, best known for his work on the recently found Ugaritic material as it related to the Bible. Cassuto wrote several works polemicising

[11] Felix Perles, *Why Do we Need Biblical Studies?*, opening lecture to the Institute for Advanced Studies at Hebrew University (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1927), pp. 9–10.

against the documentary hypothesis, pointing out features of the biblical text, including the use of typological numbers, which in his view served to unify the supposedly composite texts. He espoused a form of the fragmentary hypothesis, while frequently emphasising the sanctity of the final product. Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, speaking of the Segal and Cassuto era, noted aptly that they 'both attempted a critical study of the Bible in the context of a personal struggle between tradition and criticism'.[12]

The years 1949–50 represent a sea change in biblical studies at the university. Beginning that year, the biblical studies position was split between Yehezkel Kaufmann (1889–1963) and Isac Leo (Aryeh) Seeligmann (1907–82). Both were, to a large extent, critical biblical scholars, though neither was trained as such. Kaufmann's Ph.D. was in philosophy (although he studied with Karl Marti), and Seeligmann's in classics, though he wrote his dissertation on the Septuagint of Isaiah and had studied with the leading Dutch scholars of Bible and Semitics. Kaufmann, who consciously chose to write in Hebrew, had a significant influence on Jewish biblical scholarship, and to some extent on general biblical scholarship once his *Toldot ha-Emunah ha-Yisreelit* (The history of Israelite religion, 8 vols., 1937–56) was abridged and translated by Moshe Greenberg in 1960. (The highly polemical nature of the book, which was published in English as *The Religion of Israel*, was much less evident in Greenberg's abridgement.) Kaufmann accepted source criticism, but insisted that P precedes D, and that biblical religion was originally monotheistic. He thus reclaimed the Bible for Jews by countering the notion that it was a document that evolved, thereby necessitating the development of Christianity. As the Jewish historian David Myers notes:

> *Toldot Ha-emunah Ha-Yisreelit* went far in realizing the decades-old aspiration of Jewish scholars to wrest the Bible from non-Jewish hands. It offered a systematic reconstruction of the origins of Israelite monotheism in which Judaism appeared as the unique property of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel – and moreover, as the source, not the lower stage, of Christianity and Islam.[13]

Kaufmann also insisted on the basic historicity of the biblical text, a position upheld until the late twentieth century by most Israeli biblical scholars and archaeologists.

[12] Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, 'Sixty Years of Teaching Bible at Hebrew University: Directions, Limitations and Prospects', in Moshe Bar-Asher (ed.), *Studies in Judaica: Collected Papers of the Symposium in Honour of the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Institute of Jewish Studies (December 1984)* (Jerusalem: Akademon, 1986), pp. 41–9 at p. 43.

[13] David Nathan Myers, '"From Zion will Go Forth Torah": Jewish Scholarship and the Return to History', Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1991, p. 210.

Seeligmann, for his part, contributed to mainstream biblical scholarship, publishing in the leading journals on a wide range of issues, especially on biblical historiography. Although an observant Orthodox Jew (and rabbi), his perspective was critical and non-apologetic. He viewed biblical texts as historiography and historiosophy, in other words, reflections on the past, and was cautious in using the Bible to reconstruct history in a straightforward manner. He was a strong figure who controlled biblical studies in Israel for several decades, directing the dissertations of many scholars who later taught at the Hebrew University and other newer Israeli institutions. He also opened up Israeli biblical scholarship and scholars to mainstream European biblical scholarship, with which he was deeply connected, although he and his students avoided the study of biblical theology, which was so prevalent in the field.

Some of the next generations of Hebrew University scholars followed the model of Kaufmann, who published primarily in Hebrew for an Israeli audience, while others followed Seeligmann's model, publishing in Hebrew as well as in European languages. Meir Weiss (1898–1998) and his student Yair Zakovitch (b. 1945), who both studied the Bible from a literary perspective, represent the first school. The second group includes Shemaryahu Talmon (1920–2010), who wrote on textual criticism, the literary study of the Bible, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, and introduced sociological perspectives; Menahem Haran (b. 1924), who explored many issues concerning Priestly literature, and the canonisation, or better the development, of the Bible into a collection; Moshe Weinfeld (1925–2009), best known for his work on Deuteronomy, covenant and wisdom literature; Alexander Rofé (b. 1932), who explored a variety of Deuteronomic texts; Sara Japhet (b. 1934), who wrote influential studies on post-exilic literature and medieval exegesis; Avi Hurvitz (b. 1936), who developed the study of late biblical Hebrew; and finally Emanuel Tov (b. 1941), who advanced the study of text criticism. These scholars were joined by the Semiticist and text critic Moshe Goshen-Gottstein (1925–91), one of the main forces behind establishing and running the Hebrew University Bible Project, the Semiticist Jonas Greenfield (1926–95) and the Assyriologist Hayim Tadmor (1923–2005). Moshe Greenberg, who moved to Israel in 1970, insisted on the teaching of traditional medieval Jewish commentators as part of the curriculum. At its zenith in the 1970s and 1980s the Hebrew University had one of the largest and strongest faculties of biblical studies ever assembled, distributed among five departments (Bible, archaeology, Semitic languages, Hebrew language and Assyriology).

Biblical studies are also represented in all of the Israeli universities established after the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, sometimes as separate

departments, sometimes as part of larger Jewish studies departments; many of the new colleges recently founded also offer biblical studies as a major, since Bible has remained an important part of the elementary and high school curriculum, and a mandatory subject for Jewish students in the college matriculation exams (*bagrut*), necessitating Bible teachers with advanced degrees. The Israeli academic Bible establishment has also spearheaded several major Hebrew projects, including the extensive *Biblical Encyclopaedia* (published in 9 vols., 1950–88), and the partially completed *Miqra le-Yisrael* (The Bible for Israel) series, a critical series of commentaries geared towards a secular, academic Israeli audience.

The Bible also continues to have a special role in Israeli archaeological research, which initially sought to connect the land to the biblical story, as seen in the works of Benjamin Mazar (1906–95), Yohanan Aharoni (1919–76) and Yigael Yadin (1917–84). A similarly conservative bent was visible in the work of the historian Abraham Malamat (1922–2010). Although some archaeologists in Israel continue to pursue this type of study, some more recent scholars, especially Nadav Naaman (b. 1939) and Israel Finkelstein (b. 1949), have suggested that the Bible and the archaeological record need to be considered separately, and that they often disagree. Thus, in Israel, as elsewhere in the world, there has been some movement away from biblical archaeology to archaeology of the land of Israel, which is now often connected to ancient developments and trends in the surrounding countries rather than to a reading of the archaeological record based on a simplistic reading of the biblical text. Jewish scholars in Israel and abroad have also had a disproportionate interest in the publication and interpretation of the Dead Sea Scrolls, considered the greatest archaeological discovery of the twentieth century. Several Israeli scholars, especially Eliezer Lipa Sukenik (1889–1953), his son, Yigael Yadin, Nahman Avigad (1905–92) and Emanuel Tov, played a major role in the acquisition, publication and interpretation of the early scrolls. Although much initial study of the scrolls focused on them as background for understanding early Christianity, various Jewish scholars have explored the scrolls in relation to the Jewish movements of the period and developing Jewish legal norms (*halakhah*).

The university was not the only home for Jewish biblical studies in Israel in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Greenberg was a public intellectual who wrote and spoke about the connection between the Bible and Israeli and Jewish public life. One of the most influential biblical scholars for much of the twentieth century was Nechama Leibowitz (1905–97), who received her Ph.D. in 1931 from Marburg, writing on medieval Judaeo-German Bible

translations. Although she taught at several Israeli schools and universities, her major impact was as a master teacher through informal classes and lectures, and especially her weekly *gilyonot* (sheets) that she 'published' on the weekly Torah portion from 1942 to 1971 and which reached thousands every week. Her approach was non-critical, and most of her questions dealt with medieval and literary interpretation of the Bible, especially on how they aided a close literary reading of the text.

Most recently, an attempt to bridge the academic, critical and religious pre-critical approaches to the Bible was made by Mordechai Breuer (1921–2007), who also completed significant work on the Masorah and the Aleppo Codex. Breuer developed 'the theory of aspects', which assumes that the sources isolated by Wellhausen and his school are in a sense different documents, but that they each reflect different aspects of divine revelation, since God cannot be described, and circumscribed in a flat, unitary way. His method has made some inroads in the traditional Jewish community in Israel, and has allowed for some bridging between traditional and critical Bible study. Much scholarship within the more religious world, however, deals with issues concerning Masorah and the continued publication and interpretation of medieval Jewish biblical commentary.

Current developments

The bridge between critical and traditional biblical studies that has begun to develop in Israel is so far largely an Israeli phenomenon. Much of Orthodox American Jewry has embraced the highly traditional Artscroll series, which drew exclusively on pre-modern Jewish exegesis and the modern rabbinic approaches of Malbim or Berlin. It shows no interest in the ancient Near East or in literary features of the text, and is staunchly anti-critical. This American series contrasts with the Israeli Bible commentary *Daat Miqra* (Knowledge of the Bible), which is open to literary insight and realia, if not to fully critical scholarship. As is sometimes the case with Jewish publications, its Torah commentary is more traditional, and even includes Rashi's commentary alongside the 'modern' commentary. Indeed, even the JPS Torah Commentary (1989–96), produced in the United States and edited by Sarna, is generally less critical in its perspective than similar 'secular' commentaries, and even when it discusses sources, eschews the standard JEPD sigla. It also takes care to illustrate how post-biblical Jewish texts may be integrated into a critical biblical commentary. Finally, the extent to which Jewish biblical scholarship has come of age is illustrated by the 2004 publication by Oxford University Press of *The*

Jewish Study Bible, representing the work of thirty-six critical Jewish scholars from the United States, Canada, Great Britain and Israel.

Jewish scholars have also contributed significantly to the study of the New Testament, introducing insights from Jewish Second Temple and early rabbinic sources, as well as focusing on issues concerning boundaries and anti-Semitism in early Christianity. This development was facilitated by the opening of university positions and some seminary positions in the USA, even in the New Testament, to Jews. The publication of *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (edited by Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, 2011) suggests that there is a critical mass of Jewish scholars of the New Testament, though not surprisingly Jewish scholars continue to focus on the Tanakh rather than the New Testament.

Conclusions

Are there any unifying, distinctive features of Jewish critical biblical scholarship of the Tanakh? Perhaps the following features may be outlined. Israeli biblical scholarship, especially in its early years, was typified by a strong interest in the connection between the Bible and the land of Israel, including a focus on archaeology and realia. Most Jewish scholars engage with the text closely in the original – some Jewish scholars early in the twentieth century thought that by their very religion, Jewish scholars could understand the Bible better than their non-Jewish counterparts (Chajes, for example, exclaimed in 1919 that 'no one knows the soul of the Bible as [does] the Jew'[14]), though this position has since been abandoned. This close engagement, some familiarity with Hebrew from childhood, and the fact that the Masoretic text has served as the Jewish text in liturgical contexts may explain why Jewish scholars tend to be more reluctant than non-Jews to emend the text. It may also explain the exceptional Jewish contribution (both of biblical scholars and non-biblical scholars, such as Robert Alter (b. 1935)) to the development of certain types of literary study of the Bible. Even critical Jewish Bible scholars tend to be less atomistic in their approach to the biblical text than most of their non-Jewish counterparts – perhaps they remain influenced by the role of the text as a whole within Jewish life throughout history. Several Jewish scholars in particular (especially Seeligmann, Weingreen, Sarna, Fishbane, Zakovitch and James Kugel (b. 1945)) have emphasised the afterlife of biblical texts and traditions (thus returning to interests of the Wissenschaft scholars) and the

[14] H. Z. Chajes, *Reden und Vorträge* (Vienna: Moritz Rosenfeld, 1933), p. 152.

continuity between biblical and post-biblical texts, and how the latter may be used constructively to elucidate the former. Other Jewish scholars have helped advance the study of certain biblical books and areas that had been neglected by Protestant scholars (see e.g. Jacob Milgrom (1923–2010) and Baruch Levine (b. 1930) on Leviticus and Numbers, and Japhet on Chronicles). Jewish scholars have shown a particular interest in the rich world of medieval Jewish commentary, and how it may be used to elucidate linguistic, stylistic, literary and canonical issues. Female Jewish scholars such as Tikva Frymer-Kensky (1943–2006), Carol Meyers (b. 1942) and Athalya Brenner (b. 1943) have played a disproportionate role in the new field of feminist studies of the Bible; perhaps as Jews some have felt like outsiders, and were thus drawn to this subfield, which looks at outsiders. Finally, Jewish scholars have until recently been less interested in issues that fall under the rubric of biblical theology, since it was seen as a Protestant sub-discipline of the field; Yohanan Muffs (1932–2009) and Jon Levenson (b. 1949) are significant exceptions.

As more Jewish scholars have entered the field in the last half-decade, and Jews have taught and been taught by non-Jews, the lines between Jewish and non-Jewish critical biblical scholarship have begun to blur significantly, and it is more difficult to establish a set of factors that currently defines Jewish biblical scholarship.

18

The Bible in philosophy and hermeneutics

WERNER G. JEANROND

Introduction

Biblical interpreters in church, society and academy have always engaged in some form of conversation – implicitly or explicitly – with past and present hermeneutical traditions, developments and debates. Origen, Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, Jean Calvin – to name just a few prominent interpreters – developed their particular approaches to biblical interpretation in critical conversation with the two major trends in classical hermeneutics: textual reading and allegorical reading. Both trends had emerged in particular philosophical contexts: the former, associated with the School of Antioch, was influenced mostly by Aristotelian and the latter, associated with the School of Alexandria, mostly by Platonist thinking. The hermeneutical spectrum was thus already well circumscribed in antiquity: interpreters either paid closer attention to the textual composition of the biblical text in question or they adopted a reading perspective more in harmony with their particular ecclesial, spiritual, theological and philosophical expectations and reading traditions. Mostly, however, the result of hermeneutical labour yielded some sort of compromise between the two approaches. With regard to the interpretation of the Bible as sacred Scripture, the texts were expected to promote contact between the reader and the realm of the divine manifest in the text, thus opening a transcendent dimension in reading with the respective expectations in the reader and the larger reading community.

The relationship between biblical and philosophical hermeneutics has not necessarily been one-sided in terms of biblical interpretation merely seeking to respond to hermeneutical initiatives emerging from philosophical schools or individual hermeneuts. Rather, the praxis of biblical interpretation – involving both the actual struggle with the meaning of the text and the accompanying critical reflection – has at times, as Augustine's work on semiotics,

produced insights of great value for the development of general hermeneutics as such.[1]

The social context of reading the Bible has changed dramatically in the history of the Christian church: once the privilege of a few learned men, since the Protestant Reformation reading and writing have become more and more accessible to men and women in Western societies. Today almost everybody in the northern – though still not yet everybody in the southern – hemisphere has been able to reach full literacy. This new level of literacy and the increasing awareness of autonomous subjectivity even when reading the Bible have supported a shift in the approach to authority and authenticity in biblical interpretation. The breakthrough of a new subjective consciousness, which had begun in twelfth-century monastic, academic and court environments, has had significant consequences for biblical interpretation. The relationship between the reading person and the authority of any reading tradition needed to be redefined in modern philosophical and hermeneutical thought. This has happened mostly in university contexts.

The significance of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics for biblical interpretation

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) combined a Pietistic family background with Romantic and Enlightenment concerns. Hence, he appreciated both the individual vocation of the human subject to shape his or her religious life and the duty of the church to mediate between the individual and the social dimensions of religious development. A lifelong preacher of the Christian gospel and a theologian strongly committed to academic reform and intellectual rigour, Schleiermacher was well aware of the hermeneutical challenges in biblical interpretation and beyond. Throughout his life and in different contexts of his work he reflected on hermeneutical questions in general and on biblical interpretation in particular.

In *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (1799) Schleiermacher attended to the Bible and the question of authority in biblical interpretation. He argued that religion was personal contemplation of the universe initiated by the universe itself. Religion must not be confused with either morality or metaphysics; nor is it dependent on a specific concept of God. Rather it is sense (*Gefühl*) and taste for the infinite, that is, fully anchored in personal experience

[1] Cf. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, pp. 22–6.

and oriented towards the larger context of existential meaning. Every human being is born religious, but not everybody has been given the opportunity to develop his or her religious potential. Moreover, religion is a social phenomenon: human beings need to communicate about their religious feelings, experiences and contemplations. Religious communication, however, must not primarily be sought in books. Hence, sacred texts can never offer foundations for genuine religion. Neither a sacred text nor a sacred office can replace the religious experience of men and women. Schleiermacher rejected any Enlightenment claim on behalf of a natural religion superseding concrete human experience. Instead, he argued that only 'positive religions' – historically grown religious movements and traditions to which human beings have been committing themselves – ought to be contemplated. As far as the Christian religion is concerned, Schleiermacher warned against any closure of the canon. Although the biblical texts witness to Jesus' particular experience, life and contemplation of God's universe, they must not be used to limit the Holy Spirit. The sacred Scriptures ought not to be allowed to close off the process of individual contemplation of the universe. 'It is not the person who believes in a holy writing who has religion, but only the one who needs none and probably could make one for himself.'[2] The Scriptures have become Bible by their own power, 'but they prohibit no other book from also being or becoming Bible, and whatever had been written with equal power they would gladly have associated with themselves'.[3] Religion is by nature pluralistic and 'nothing is more unchristian than to seek uniformity in religion'.[4]

In subsequent writings Schleiermacher further developed these insights. Language mediates between phenomena and knowledge, on the one hand, and between the knowing individuals, on the other. Individuality and infinity are limit concepts which can never be fully grasped. Moreover, religion is by nature inter-subjective, and individual human beings can only relate to themselves through relating to all human beings (*Menschheit*). Thus the human being does not possess the means to offer foundations for its own autonomy (against Descartes); rather, she is always already involved in inter-subjective relationships including the feeling (*Gefühl*) of absolute dependence on God. Anthropological reflection on the human self needs theological reflection, and both require social and ecclesial reflection. Revelation can only be contemplated within this broader and dynamic determination of human life.

[2] Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 135.
[3] Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 220 (translation corrected).
[4] Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 222.

Religion, thinking and acting are interdependent. Religion opens the human being for the infinite, for God. Hence, against Kant's reduction of religion to morality, Schleiermacher defends the independence of religion; against Hegel, he argues for the limited nature of human knowledge of God; and against Spinoza he distinguishes clearly between God and world. Schleiermacher's approach to religion, anthropology, philosophy and sociology influences his hermeneutics and is in turn propelled by his hermeneutical considerations.

He was the first modern thinker to claim universal scope for the hermeneutical problem and, as a result, to call for a general philosophical theory of understanding. By asking 'What is human understanding?' and 'How does it happen?' he freed biblical interpretation from the prison of shifting ecclesiastical authorities and individualistic claims to biblical truth. Moreover, unlike Kant, Schleiermacher reflected explicitly on the fact that we human beings are linguistic beings. We have no access to any knowledge outside language. Language is the house of our being. Hence, language both opens our transcendental horizon and limits it at the same time. Hermeneutical reflection explores this universal condition of humankind as well as the particular expressions in the different linguistic systems.

Hermeneutics, therefore, must not be reduced to a mere set of instruments which just needed to be applied in order to distil the meaning and truth of a particular text. Rather, Schleiermacher defined hermeneutics as 'the art of understanding'.[5] Only a general philosophical reflection on this art can provide the foundation for any specialised application, such as biblical interpretation. For Schleiermacher, biblical interpretation was not an independent praxis guided by the nature and use of the particular canon of sacred texts; rather it was a mere sub-discipline of general hermeneutics – a claim that has been dividing theological hermeneuts ever since.

Because a general hermeneutics was still lacking, Schleiermacher set out to develop it.[6] His overarching concern was to treat with equal respect the objective and subjective aspects of human communication. All understanding presupposes language; hence there is no way to understand any human communication without due linguistic competence. Language occurs always as a combination of general patterns of convention (its grammatical or objective aspect) and individual performance (its technical, subjective or 'psychological' aspect). Every text production is the result of a particular application of conventional linguistic rules; every act of text reception is based on an

[5] Schleiermacher in Mueller-Vollmer (ed.), *Hermeneutics Reader*, p. 73.
[6] Cf. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, pp. 44–53.

individual application of conventional modes of understanding. A text is a kind of individual universal where a network of individually applied conventions and rules work together in order to create a new and meaningful whole. The particularity of composition forms the 'style' of the text, and no purely grammatical consideration could ever produce a concept of a particular style because the very conceptualisation of the individuality of a text would dissolve this individuality. Therefore a text can never be understood completely, but only by approximation.[7] All interpretation requires what Schleiermacher termed a 'divinatory' aspect. This terminology does not imply a secret or mysterious grasp of the world, meaning, or author of the text. Rather, it stresses the necessarily courageous risk by interpreters who approach the text in full knowledge of their inability ever to exhaust its individuality. Because the general and the individual penetrate each other in a text, their combination can be understood ultimately only through divination.[8]

In view of these explanations, Schleiermacher's definition of the rules of interpretation may be understandable: 'The rules for the art of interpretation must be developed from a positive formula, and this is: "the historical and divinatory, objective and subjective reconstruction of a given statement".'[9] Ultimately, the aim of interpretation is: 'to understand the text at first as well [as] and then even better than its author'.[10] Thus, the interpreter ought to be familiar with the author's language (hence the importance of the original languages for biblical interpretation) and acquire a knowledge of the author's internal and external life – a knowledge accessible in the first instance through interpreting the author's writings.[11]

Schleiermacher provoked a revolution in hermeneutical thinking. Once a sub-discipline of theological and literary disciplines, hermeneutics was now presented as an overarching philosophical discipline essential for anybody wishing to understand another person's linguistic communication. Schleiermacher subordinated biblical interpretation fully to his general hermeneutical principles. The interpreter of the Scriptures enjoys no special privileges. Schleiermacher spent much energy refuting the claim that the biblical texts, once they are considered to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, deserved a different set of interpretative rules. He insisted that a *dogmatic* decision about inspiration cannot be expected because such a decision rests itself on

[7] Schleiermacher in Mueller-Vollmer (ed.), *Hermeneutics Reader*, p. 95.
[8] Mueller-Vollmer (ed.), *Hermeneutics Reader*, p. 83.
[9] Mueller-Vollmer (ed.), *Hermeneutics Reader*, p. 83.
[10] Mueller-Vollmer (ed.), *Hermeneutics Reader*, p. 83.
[11] Mueller-Vollmer (ed.), *Hermeneutics Reader*, p. 84.

interpretation.[12] Thus, that the sacred books are sacred we know only through having understood them. Schleiermacher agreed that the sacred books also require a particular hermeneutics, but he insisted that the particular can only be understood through the universal, thus any special biblical hermeneutics must be firmly based on general hermeneutical insights and principles.[13]

Philosophical hermeneutics and biblical interpretation

Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860), the founder of the Protestant Tübingen School, developed his programme of speculative hermeneutics in critical conversation with Schleiermacher's hermeneutics and with G. W. F. Hegel's (1770–1831) philosophy of history. Hegel had attempted to overcome the conflict between a religion, based on historically doubtful biblical sources, and critical human reason by concentrating on selected religious ideas and by synthesising them into a larger system of an all-embracing historical spirit. He understood this spirit both as the principle of development and as its final goal.

Like Hegel, Baur was convinced that the particular manifestations and historical forms of spiritual life could only be understood with due regard to the idea which creates their inner cohesion. In this sense, philosophy proved essential for biblical interpretation. However, unlike Hegel, Baur kept the ultimate course of history open. Moreover, like Schleiermacher, he wanted to interpret the particular textual witnesses of the Christian religion in a critical way: historical knowledge required an interplay between authentic objectivity and authentic subjectivity, although Baur was more insistent than Schleiermacher on the significance of the actual distance between interpreter and text.[14] The thoughts of the eternal Spirit cannot be understood without investing human subjectivity into the hermeneutical task. This, in turn, necessarily leads to particular exegetical and historiographical considerations. Since the nature of truth is developmental, there can be no fixed dogmatics. Hence, Baur subjected biblical interpretation to an overarching consideration of how to interpret particular manifestations of history. This methodological commitment did not, however, reduce his equally strong commitment to the detailed work of interpretation – which later on even Karl Barth, always

[12] Mueller-Vollmer (ed.), *Hermeneutics Reader*, p. 80.
[13] Cf. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, p. 49.
[14] Peter C. Hodgson, 'Introduction', in Baur, *On the Writing of Church History*, pp. 3–40 at p. 23.

the enemy of exegetical subjection to non-theological programmes, was to acknowledge and praise.[15] Rather, Baur's method was 'phenomenological' in that it intended 'by means of a critical movement from consciousness to subject matter, to permit the subject matter, the given to "appear," to present itself to the knower as it is in itself'.[16]

The individual appears always within a particular intellectual (*geistig*) context, and Baur saw it as the task of the interpreter to try and understand this context. However, the interpreter must also understand her or his own context within this historical process in order to assess the possibilities and limitations of interpretation. The further development of hermeneutics, including biblical interpretation, depended on the willingness or unwillingness of the interpreter to accept this hermeneutical predicament.

Reacting to the ever more self-conscious natural sciences, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) promoted Schleiermacher's hermeneutical insights in support of a programme of re-establishing the humanities as critical academic disciplines. Dilthey identified the task of the natural sciences as *explaining* natural phenomena and the task of the human sciences as *understanding* human life and its complex forms of expressions. Both disciplines may of course interpret the same phenomena, but through different perspectives and with the help of different methods.[17] Understanding presupposes the connectedness of the whole which presents itself to us and seeks to grasp the individual in this context. And the very fact that we are living in the awareness of this connectedness makes it possible for us to understand a particular sentence, gesture or activity.[18] Hermeneutics, therefore, is the foundational theory for all the humanities. Its principal aim is to understand life itself through its expressions.[19] Working at a different time and faced with different challenges, Dilthey went beyond Schleiermacher's hermeneutical concerns by insisting, like Baur, on the historical nature of all hermeneutical work. However, unlike Schleiermacher, Dilthey paid less attention to the linguisticality of human understanding, and unlike Baur, he was less concerned with the necessarily subjective, hence selective and interest-laden approach to interpretation.

Martin Heidegger's (1889–1976) discussion of the hermeneutical predicament in his earlier work and his return to the significance of language for understanding human life in this universe in his later work proved inspiring

[15] Barth, *Protestant Theology*, p. 505.
[16] Hodgson, 'Introduction', in Baur, *On the Writing of Church History*, p. 19.
[17] Cf. Weder, *Neutestamentliche Hermeneutik*, pp. 108–14.
[18] Cf. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, p. 52.
[19] See also Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, pp. 98–123.

for the development of theological hermeneutics, and thus can illustrate once more the potentially close connection between philosophical and theological developments in interpretation theory.

In *Being and Time* (1927) Heidegger challenged phenomenological thinking to become conscious of time as the condition of the ontology of *Dasein* (literally: 'being there'), as suggested in the programmatic subtitle: *The Interpretation of Dasein in Terms of Temporality, and the Explication of Time as the Transcendental Horizon for the Question of Being*. Understanding can mean two things for Heidegger: the fundamental existential structure of *Dasein* or one of the many modes of knowing. The first meaning emphasises the openness of *Dasein* towards its own possibilities – understanding as a project. The concrete forms in which understanding works out its possibilities he called interpretation (*Auslegung*). However, this interpretative act of something as something is always based on interest (*Vorhabe*), foresight (*Vorsicht*) and pre-apprehension (*Vorgriff*). It is thus never free of presuppositions.[20] Every interpretation culminating in the disclosure of meaning (*Sinn*) is always already structured by the prejudgements of the understanding person. *Sinn* as an existential structure belongs to *Dasein*, is part of the human context. Moreover, all interpretation is circular: in order to understand, the interpreter must already know what is to be interpreted.[21] This hermeneutical circle is not to be regretted, but to be explored in terms of its possibilities to do justice to the phenomena and in terms of its conditioning and therefore also limiting nature.[22] There is no disclosure of meaning without concealment.

The later Heidegger's concern with language challenged any reductionist view of language as a mere instrument for the expression of inner movements and feelings and of underlying worldviews.[23] Instead, he claimed that language was essentially neither expression nor an activity of the human being. Language speaks (*Die Sprache spricht*). In language, especially in poetic language, language unfolds its true essence, that is, it evokes the nature of things, but in such a way that the painful difference between thing and world becomes manifest. The essence of language needs the human speaking in order to transmit the call of being. The human being speaks insofar as he or she corresponds to language. The corresponding is listening. For Heidegger,

[20] Heidegger in Mueller-Vollmer (ed.), *Hermeneutics Reader*, p. 223.
[21] Mueller-Vollmer (ed.), *Hermeneutics Reader*, p. 225.
[22] Mueller-Vollmer (ed.), *Hermeneutics Reader*, p. 226.
[23] For a discussion of Heidegger's *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (1959) see Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, pp. 62–3.

thoughtful listening to language was the key for the re-establishing of contact with true or authentic being.

Heidegger's philosophy gave rise to an explosion in hermeneutical studies. His philosophical analysis of the human person's existential possibility to decide for or against an authentic life motivated Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) and other theologians to develop programmes in response to this existential challenge.[24] According to Bultmann biblical interpretation must not be limited to purely material, that is, theological, aspects; the conditions for human understanding also need to be examined, and the possibilities of a connecting point between God's self-revelation and our human understanding of God's activity among us must be assessed. Philosophical hermeneutical reflection is necessary for proper biblical interpretation. 'Since the exegete exists historically and must hear the word of Scripture as spoken in his special historical situation, he will always understand the old word anew. Always anew it will tell him who he, man, is and who God is, and he will always have to express this word in a new conceptuality.'[25]

Karl Barth (1886–1968) and Bultmann were united in their critique of a purely historicist exegesis, and both theologians called for a deeper, more critical approach to biblical interpretation.[26] However, they disagreed on the nature of that approach. While Barth remained suspicious of philosophical hermeneutics and instead promoted a hermeneutics of faith,[27] Bultmann's hermeneutical programme, his search for authenticity in Christian existence and his existentialist rhetoric owed much to Heidegger's philosophy. Bultmann was also indebted to Schleiermacher and Dilthey, whose dissatisfaction with a mere analysis of the formal constituents of a text he shared. What ultimately mattered was to understand what the text means. Hence, in addition to the objective move in interpretation a subjective move (what Schleiermacher had called divination and what Dilthey had meant by the common experience of human life) was required in which the interpreters grasped the subject matter of the text by relating it to their own existential situation. Although Bultmann's own existential perspective differed from those of Schleiermacher and Dilthey, he agreed with both that an interpretative perspective was necessary. There is no exegesis 'without presuppositions, inasmuch as the exegete is not a *tabula rasa*, but on the contrary, approaches the text with specific

[24] Bultmann in Mueller-Vollmer (ed.), *Hermeneutics Reader*, p. 247.
[25] Mueller-Vollmer (ed.), *Hermeneutics Reader*, pp. 257–8.
[26] For a detailed discussion of the Barth–Bultmann debate see Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, pp. 127–48.
[27] On Barth's hermeneutics see Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, pp. 185–90.

questions or with a specific way of raising questions and thus has a certain idea of the subject matter with which the text is concerned'.[28]

Karl Barth saw Bultmann's existentialist hermeneutics as an imposition on the biblical texts and on their subject matter, whereas Bultmann (like Schleiermacher) argued that interpretation of the biblical writings 'is not subject to different conditions of understanding from those applying to any other literature'.[29] Against Barth, he stressed that even the realisation of God's self-revelation in human history depended on some form of pre-understanding. Such a pre-understanding was provoked by our existential knowledge of God. Biblical interpretation ought to be free from prejudice, but could never be without pre-understanding. Barth championed a hermeneutics of revelation, whereas Bultmann promoted a hermeneutics of signification[30] – moving through the texts with the help of his existential hermeneutics towards a renewed understanding of God's presence. Barth was not concerned with the general conditions of human communication. Rather he defended faith as the only appropriate horizon for biblical interpretation.

Gerhard Ebeling (1912–2001) and other representatives of the so-called New Hermeneutic movement responded to the later Heidegger's philosophy of language in an effort to formulate a coherent and critical hermeneutics for Protestant theology, combining a Reformation theology of God's Word with contemporary interpretation theory. Ebeling's question was how to allow revelation to become contemporaneous with us today. He thus accepted both philosophical and linguistic considerations, especially Heidegger's notion of the event character of language. Ebeling stressed the depth dimension of every linguistic event – diagnosing in every word event 'a depth dimension which is indicated by the word "God" . . . as a hidden and tacit word event to which every word owes its existence'.[31] The biblical texts witness to this universal linguistic event, though one must not identify them with that event itself. Ebeling's hermeneutics was therefore concerned with removing any obstacles which might prevent the Word from mediating understanding by itself.[32] Hermeneutics serves the Word. The only real hermeneutical correspondence is the one between Word and Faith. Hence, although Ebeling, unlike Barth, was open to philosophical hermeneutics, his actual hermeneutical needs, like

[28] Bultmann in Mueller-Vollmer (ed.), *Hermeneutics Reader*, p. 242.
[29] Johnson (ed.), *Bultmann: Interpreting Faith*, p. 153.
[30] Cf. Eberhard Jüngel, *Gottes Sein ist im Werden: Verantwortliche Rede vom Sein Gottes bei Karl Barth.Eine Paraphrase*, 3rd edn. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1976), p. 27.
[31] Ebeling in Klemm, *Hermeneutical Inquiry*, vol. 1, p. 212.
[32] Ebeling in Klemm, *Hermeneutical Inquiry*, vol. 1, p. 219.

those of Barth, were determined by his theological approach to the Word of God. He appreciated the critical function of hermeneutics, but only within the limits of his particular theological programme.

Text hermeneutics and biblical interpretation

Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1900–2002) *Truth and Method* (1960) further invigorated the discussion of hermeneutical questions in philosophy and theology. Following Heidegger's analysis of the constructive role of pre-understandings and using the example of text interpretation, Gadamer examined human understanding and self-understanding. Thus, he approached hermeneutics in terms of a philosophical reflection on what happens when human beings understand and not in terms of a methodological programme or a prescription for more successful reading. Distancing himself somewhat from Schleiermacher's rehabilitation of subjectivity in hermeneutics, Gadamer argued in favour of the centrality of tradition for the interpretative process. 'Understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated. This is what must be validated by hermeneutic theory, which is far too dominated by the idea of a procedure, a method.'[33] The interpreter's pre-understanding is always already co-conditioned by the text's own history of effects. Gadamer spoke of the 'historically operative consciousness' (*Wirkungsgeschichte*)[34] of a text and identified the structure of that consciousness as language: 'Being that can be understood is language.'[35] Language is the place of the disclosure of truth. And this disclosure is the aim of the hermeneutical experience and the sign of its universality.

Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) both welcomed and criticised Gadamer's hermeneutics. In particular he challenged Gadamer's uncritical trust in the flow of communication, his confidence in the self-manifestation of tradition and his unwillingness to consider critical and self-critical methodological moves in text interpretation. Ricoeur proposed a twofold hermeneutical reflection combining understanding with critical and self-critical explanatory moves. Every hermeneutics of retrieval needed also a hermeneutics of suspicion. He urged

[33] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 290.
[34] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 300–7.
[35] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 474.

hermeneuts to learn from the masters of suspicion, including Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, about the shifting cultural, political etc. distortions affecting the process of reading, and he welcomed the services of critical linguistics, critical theory and literary criticism. Moreover, in a number of publications Ricoeur contributed directly to biblical interpretation – both programmatically and through detailed interpretation of a number of biblical texts.[36] He further developed Schleiermacher's project of a general hermeneutics with similar emphasis on the actual functioning of human communication, and he advanced the application of his own critical hermeneutics on a number of aspects of biblical interpretation.

The theological reception of Ricoeur's hermeneutics has not been unlike that of the reception of Schleiermacher's. Some biblical interpreters and theologians consider any call to subject biblical interpretation to the critical parameters of a general philosophical hermeneutics as an attack on the authority of the Word of God transmitted directly through the Bible. For example, Kevin Vanhoozer complains that despite its rich Christian parentage, 'hermeneutics has of late been squandering its inheritance. The prodigal interpreter has quit the house of authority in pursuit of Enlightenment autonomy.'[37] To this lost son – the representative of a general hermeneutics – Vanhoozer wishes to show hermeneutics in general 'the way back to its Christian home'.[38] In radical opposition to followers of Schleiermacher and Ricoeur, he argues that the Bible 'should be interpreted "like any other book," but every other book should be interpreted with norms that we have derived from a reflection on how to read Scripture'.[39] Once again, as in the Barth–Bultmann debate on biblical interpretation, a radical difference of approach to biblical interpretation is evident here: is the biblical interpreter to be guided by the content of the Bible (divine revelation), or is the biblical interpreter to travel the long road through the actual texts, their material composition and the spectrum of adequate genres and styles of reading, that is, engaging in critical and self-critical moves of understanding, explanation and assessment?[40] Should biblical interpretation pursue a hermeneutics of revelation or engage in a hermeneutics of signification?

[36] Cf., for example, Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*. See also Bühler and Frey (eds.), *Paul Ricœur*.
[37] Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, pp. 207–8.
[38] Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, p. 208.
[39] Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, p. 208.
[40] Cf. Jeanrond, *Text and Interpretation*, pp. 73–128.

Emerging trends

While Barthians, neo-Barthians, post-liberals and related groups of biblical interpreters continue to defend the primacy of a truly *theological* hermeneutics, which at best may benefit from ad hoc insights emerging from philosophical hermeneutics, the discussion of the demands and implications of a hermeneutics of signification for biblical interpretation has continued in different academic, religious and cultural contexts.[41] Up to the 1960s, Protestant thinkers dominated this discussion. However, since then hermeneutical thinking has been enriched by new ecumenical and even interreligious approaches to the interpretation of sacred texts with the help of all available critical theories and methods.[42] Hence, critical reasoning and biblical interpretation can enter into a mutually critical and beneficial correlation. In the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council many Roman Catholic hermeneuts have joined the global discussion on appropriate approaches to biblical interpretation. Although the Roman Catholic magisterium reserves for itself the ultimate right to judge the orthodoxy of any particular biblical reading, it encourages full participation in the critical study of the Scriptures and the development of interpretative methodologies.

In today's academic contexts literary, linguistic, sociological, political, psychological, post-colonial, postmodern, gender-related, queer, cultural-critical and emancipatory approaches to biblical interpretation are discussed and tested.[43] It is widely realised that both the composition of the biblical texts and their past and present reception in different contexts need to be critically and self-critically examined in order to do justice to the communicative potential and perspectives of these texts in their various functions: ecclesial, spiritual, theological, religious, philosophical, cultural, gender-related, emancipatory etc. In the context of this discussion, the question of the significance of reading communities has received considerable attention. To what extent do communities of readers co-constitute textual sense? And which among the pre-understandings that structure the process of reading are legitimate and which are not when assessed in view of the communicative perspectives of the text? Moreover, which is the actual text to be interpreted: the entire Bible, individual books in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, or particular sub-texts selected by reading traditions, communities or individuals?

[41] See Treier, *Theological Interpretation*.
[42] Cf. Tracy, 'Western Hermeneutics'.
[43] See Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, pp. 255–348.

This question is linked to the issue of canonicity of the Bible. Finally, the question of authorship and inspiration arises afresh in any such discussion: does God speak through biblical texts or is God to be understood as the author of these texts? Once again, an overarching theological issue comes to the fore in biblical hermeneutics: Schleiermacher and his followers have argued that any insight into the divine inspiration of the biblical texts is itself a result of interpretation, whereas the hermeneutical camp opposed to this approach argues: 'With the birth of the reader, the divine has been relocated: the postmodern era is more comfortable thinking of God not as the transcendent Author but as the immanent Spirit.'[44] Hence, assumptions about the nature of God's presence in the world influence biblical interpretation today as they did in the classical School of Alexandria. The debate between Antiochene champions of a hermeneutics of signification and Alexandrian champions of a *theological* hermeneutics continues. There is no neutral biblical reading. Any consideration of the ethics of biblical interpretation will have to take this insight into account.

[44] Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, p. 212.

19

Fundamentalist readings of the Bible

HARRIET HARRIS

Identifying fundamentalism

Fundamentalist readings of the Bible are not literalist, necessarily. Nor is it true that they 'abrogat[e] human reason to absolute divine revelation',[1] as should become clear in the course of this discussion. Rather, fundamentalist readings are inerrantist readings. They are governed by a concern to uphold the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. This doctrine teaches that the Bible in its original manuscripts contained no errors, and that any errors we may find in our texts are errors of copying or translation, and have providentially been kept to a minimum. Most fundamentalists take this to mean that the Bible contains no factual errors: '*The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.*'[2] Moreover, fundamentalists interpret biblical passages factually wherever possible. If factual interpretations are not possible, either because they would put Scripture at odds with itself or with facts known from elsewhere to be incontrovertible (such as that the mustard seed is not the smallest of all seeds, or indeed because evidence against six-day creation seems to be overbearing)[3] – then fundamentalist readings relinquish a factual interpretation in order to maintain the view that Scripture contains no error.

We can best appreciate the ways in which the doctrine of inerrancy determines fundamentalist readings of Scripture by considering why the doctrine is so important to fundamentalists, and how they arrive at it. This we will do after an initial discussion of the difficulties of using the label 'fundamentalist'.

[1] Stephen Prickett, *Narrative, Religion and Science: Fundamentalism versus Irony, 1700–1999* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 134.

[2] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 90.

[3] Few early fundamentalists were six-day creationists. B. B. Warfield and A. A. Hodge who formulated the doctrine of inerrancy accepted biological evolution. Factual readings of Genesis have become more popular with the growth of the Creation-Science Movement from the 1960s onwards.

The 'fundamentalist' label

Even people who call themselves 'fundamentalist' are wary of anyone else putting that label on them, for it is usually used pejoratively and the position it denotes is often caricatured. Sometimes it is evangelicals who offer the crudest caricatures of fundamentalists: as thoroughgoing literalists, as anti-intellectual and as harbouring mechanical views of biblical inspiration.[4] Evangelicals sometimes also imply that fundamentalists are committed to a particular eschatology. They have in mind pre-millennial dispensationalism, which teaches that the Antichrist will soon wage battle and that Christ will rapture true believers to meet him in the sky before beginning a 1,000-year reign. Pre-millennial dispensationalism played a significant role in the origins of fundamentalism, and is indeed still prominent amongst fundamentalists in the USA. The success of the *Left Behind* series has further heightened its profile since the mid-1990s.[5] Pre-millennial dispensationalism is by no means key to understanding fundamentalist readings of the Bible, but given its popularity amongst fundamentalists in the USA and its own distinctive approach to interpreting Scripture, we will look briefly at its teaching.

Pre-millennial dispensationalists interpret all the events of the book of Revelation as prophecies about the (near) future, as opposed to historicist members of Prophetic movements who interpret Revelation in the light of historical events.[6] They believe Christ will return imminently, before which Jews will re-gather in the Holy Land. Hal Lindsey in *The Late Great Planet Earth* predicted that the end would come within a generation (usually forty years) of the founding of Israel in 1948.[7] Since then, dispensationalists have had to revise their dating, and they follow events in the Middle East closely. Aside from the significance they attach to Israel, they also predict that we will suffer wars, political and economic unrest, natural disasters, epidemics, climate change,

[4] E.g. John Stott in David L. Edwards and John Stott, *Essentials: A Liberal–Evangelical Dialogue* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988), pp. 90–1; Derek J. Tidball, *Who Are the Evangelicals? Tracing the Roots of Modern Movements* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994), pp. 17–18.

[5] The *Left Behind* series is a collection of sixteen best-selling novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, set in the end times when some believers have been raptured and the world is in chaos. The books have been phenomenally successful in America and the Far East, though less significant in Europe, where adherence to pre-millennial dispensationalism is minimal. Jerry Falwell said about the first book, *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days* (Tyndale House Publishers, 1995): 'In terms of its impact on Christianity, it's probably greater than that of any other book in modern times, outside the Bible': *Time Magazine*, www.time.com/time/covers/1101050207/photoessay/15.html.

[6] Herein lay the crucial difference in the latter half of the nineteenth century between John Nelson Darby, leader of the Plymouth Brethren, who devised the pre-millennial dispensationalist system, and the historicist Henry Gratten Guiness.

[7] Lindsey and Carlson, *Late Great Planet Earth*.

a decline in morality, family break-ups and crime. They expect that organised Christianity will experience apostasy; that religious leaders will abandon historical beliefs and openly embrace heresy and immorality. They interpret such events around them as 'signs of the times', and have websites offering 'insight into how current world events relate to the Bible message'.[8]

Dispensationalists developed a complex system of biblical interpretation, which they regard as 'rightly dividing the world of truth' (2 Tim. 2:15), whereby they divide up the Bible and human history into various dispensations. A dispensation is a period 'during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some *specific* revelation of the will of God'.[9] *The Scofield Bible*, which became the standard text to be used by millions of fundamentalist dispensationalists last century, lists the dispensations as Innocence (Gen. 1:28); Conscience (Gen. 3:23); Human Government (Gen. 8:20); Promise (Gen. 12:1); Law (Exod. 19:18); Grace (John 1:17); and Kingdom (Eph. 1:10). According to this schema, the present age is under the dispensation of Grace, which began with the death and resurrection of Christ. Surprisingly, this relegates Christ's teachings to the dispensation of law. The *New Scofield Bible* (1967, compiled by a series of editors) gave Christ's teachings greater prominence, perhaps so that Christ's authority could be invoked in defence of inerrancy.[10]

One difficulty with defining fundamentalists as dispensationalist pre-millennialists is that not all fundamentalists adhere to this system. Moreover, its method of Bible reading is not in any way essential to a fundamentalist approach to Scripture. A further difficulty is that the wider evangelical world is itself not untouched by this brand of pre-millennialism, and so dispensationalist pre-millennialism does not serve adequately as a distinguishing feature between fundamentalists and evangelicals.[11]

When evangelicals distort fundamentalism, they do so usually in order to distinguish themselves from it. To their chagrin, they are themselves sometimes called fundamentalist by critics who argue that their view of Scripture does not differ significantly from the fundamentalist one.[12] A complicating factor is that the fundamentalist label is legitimately used both of a historical movement and of an inerrantist approach to Scripture that developed in tandem with the movement. Many evangelicals dissociate themselves from

[8] E.g. The Signs of the Times website is at www.thesignsofthetimes.co.uk/.
[9] Scofield (ed.), *Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 5 n.4.
[10] Boone, *Bible Tells Them So*, p. 80.
[11] For example, in 2007 the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association honoured the *Left Behind* series with its ECPA Pinnacle Award.
[12] James Barr's book *Fundamentalism* has been the most contentious in this respect.

the movement but share aspects of inerrantism: 'Unless the Bible is without error', wrote the popular philosopher-theologian Francis Schaeffer, 'our spiritual and physical children will be left with the ground cut out from under them, with no foundation upon which to build their faith or their lives.'[13]

We need a narrative that makes sense of the development of fundamentalism both as a movement and as this distinctive approach to Scripture, according to which the Bible must be secured as inerrant or else the whole structure of faith must collapse.

A history of fundamentalism as both movement and biblical approach

The emergence of fundamentalism

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries evangelicals of various strains in North America became allies in opposition to the influences of liberal theology and higher criticism. In the 1920s 'fundamentalism' became the term in the USA to describe the resultant and rather awkward coalition of evangelicals. This coalition included members of the already diverse Prophetic and Holiness movements (which included premillennial dispensationalists) and Presbyterian theologians from Princeton Theological Seminary.

In the preceding decade evangelical leaders from these diverse quarters had defended the authority of the Bible in a series of pamphlets called *The Fundamentals*.[14] Some contributors to these pamphlets were opposed to higher criticism entirely, whilst others rejected not the practice per se, but the naturalistic assumptions, hypothetical speculations and subjective conjectures of 'the German fancy'.[15] Most contributors challenged the notion that criticism could be neutral. They cast aspersions on the 'assured results' of higher criticism, and urged linguistic and historical critics to take the 'special divine authority' of Scripture into account in their scholarship.[16] These publications did not have a huge impact, but they took on significance in retrospect, as a symbol in the 1920s of a conservative front against modernism.

[13] Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1984), p. 46.

[14] These were published between around 1909 and 1915, and disseminated to ministers across America and Britain with the aid of money from Californian oil tycoons.

[15] Dyson Hague, 'History of the Higher Criticism', in Dixon et al. (eds.), *The Fundamentals*, vol. I, pp. 87–122 at p. 90.

[16] Franklin Johnson, 'Fallacies of the Higher Criticism', in Dixon et al. (eds.), *The Fundamentals*, vol. II, pp. 48–68 at p. 49; Robert Anderson, 'Christ and Criticism', in Dixon et al. (eds.), *The Fundamentals*, vol. II, pp. 69–84 at p. 70; William Caven, 'The Testimony of Christ to the Old Testament', in Dixon et al. (eds.), *The Fundamentals*, vol. IV, pp. 46–72 at p. 55.

The label 'fundamentalist' was itself coined in 1920 by Curtis Lee Laws, a Northern Baptist wishing to defend the fundamentals of the faith.[17] Laws subsequently became unhappy with both the militancy and inerrantism of the movement he helped to name. During the fundamentalist–modernist controversies of the 1920s, fundamentalists fought the modernists in their denominations, and some left to form their own churches. The doctrine of inerrancy quickly became the hallmark of fundamentalism. It remained the hallmark of much post-fundamentalist evangelicalism within the Anglo-Saxon world in the twentieth century. Within the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), for example, inerrancy has been defended as a 'cornerstone', a 'foundational truth' and 'a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense' for those who do not believe.[18]

Diversification

ETS is a product of a significant development in fundamentalist–evangelical history. In the mid-twentieth century some among the second generation of fundamentalists became dissatisfied with the isolationism of their religion, and sought to be more intellectually and socially engaged. They became known as the new evangelicals, and ETS was their theological arm. Their theologians included Carl F. H. Henry, Bernard Ramm and Harold Lindsell. Billy Graham was their front-man for evangelism. They made positive contacts with evangelicals in Britain, whose emerging leading spokesmen were John Stott, who stood in the Keswick Holiness tradition, and the more Puritan-inclined James I. Packer. The new evangelicals rejected the separatism of their fundamentalist parents but retained the doctrine of inerrancy, over which they have since endured decades of dispute.

Meanwhile, old-style fundamentalists maintained a doctrine of separation, keeping themselves separate from worldly activities and attitudes, from non-fundamentalist Christians, and even from anyone who mixes with non-fundamentalist Christians. On this basis they denounced Billy Graham for accepting sponsorship from people who are not 'born again' and 'Bible believing', and condemned the politicised fundamentalist Jerry Falwell (whom they derisorily labelled 'neo-fundamentalist') for working with Catholics, Jews, Mormons and 'Protestants of every stripe' in forming the lobby group the Moral Majority.[19]

[17] Curtis Lee Laws, 'Convention Side Lights', *Watchman-Examiner*, 1 July 1920, p. 834.

[18] Douglas A. Oss, 'The Interpretation of the "Stone" Passages by Peter and Paul: A Comparative Study', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 32:2 (1989), pp. 181–200 at p. 181.

[19] Roland Rasmussen, 'Reasons Why I Cannot Support Billy Graham', Chapel address, Bob Jones University, 15 February 1966; Bob Jones III, 'The Moral Majority', *Faith for the Family*, September 1980, p. 27.

Separatist fundamentalists see their stance as 'inherently part of the doctrine of God's absolute holiness – separation (sanctification) from the world, from false religion, and from every practice of disobedience to the Scriptures'.[20]

Fundamentalism seen in the light of Holiness spirituality

Most evangelicals in Britain dissociated themselves from the militant separatism of American fundamentalists in the 1920s, and were also cautious about 'inerrancy'. In the 1925 symposium *Evangelicalism*, G. T. Manley would not press for 'verbal inerrancy in detail', although believing that 'as a fact' the Bible contains 'no scientific error', and T. C. Hammond would argue only for 'substantial accuracy'.[21] British evangelicals were more restrained than their American counterparts, partly because they were more infused with the experientialist and tolerant outlook of the Keswick Holiness movement;[22] an outlook which William Bell Riley, founder of the World Christian Fundamentals Association (1919) in America, called 'carelessness'.[23] Fundamentalist apologists in America made a point of raising objective fact and reason over above subjective feelings and experience. James Gresham Machen, a theologian from Princeton, and the most intellectual apologist for the fundamentalist cause in the 1920s, argued that 'Modern liberalism' was 'unscientific' precisely because of its subjective starting point in human experience.[24] He lambasted it as a 'retrograde, anti-intellectual movement' which 'degrades the intellect by excluding it from the sphere of religion'.[25] He emphasised that 'Christian experience is rightly used when it confirms the documentary evidence. But it can never possibly provide a substitute for the documentary evidence.'[26] The experiential emphasis of Keswick Holiness teaching, therefore, worked in the opposite direction from a fundamentalist approach to the Bible.

We continue to see the significance of the Holiness influence in its charismatic and Pentecostal heirs. Even those charismatics and Pentecostals who

[20] Words of the fundamentalist historian David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism since the 1850s* (Greenville, SC: Unusual Publications, 1986), p. 6.
[21] Both in J. Russell Howden (ed.), *Evangelicalism* (London: Chas. J. Thynne & Jarvis, 1925), pp. 136–7, 182.
[22] David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 80–1, 167–9.
[23] In *The Christian Fundamentalist* 2 (1928) p. 7, quoted in George M. Marsden, 'Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon: A Comparison with English Evangelicalism', *Church History* 46 (1977), pp. 215–32 at p. 220.
[24] Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, p. 7.
[25] Machen, *What is Faith?*, pp. 26, 18.
[26] Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, p. 72.

adopt a fundamentalist hermeneutic necessarily subvert it in so far as they treat their spiritual experiences as authoritative. Moreover, most post-conservative evangelicals come from charismaticised churches, or have Pietist roots,[27] and appeal to experience to combat what they characterise as the extreme 'rationalism' or 'fundamentalism' of their evangelical past.[28] It is striking how Roger Olson takes the inverse line from that of Machen above. He asserts that 'right experience [is] the true heart of the matter', and criticises conservative evangelical theology for relegating 'experience . . . to a secondary status as irrelevant to the authority of divine revelation and the truth of Christianity'.[29] He and his post-conservative colleagues are in turn accused of liberalism by their evangelical critics.[30]

Fundamentalist approaches to Scripture amongst evangelicals

Despite the influence of Holiness movements in modifying fundamentalist militancy and rationalism, it is disingenuous to suggest that British, or charismatic, or Pentecostal evangelicals do not give fundamentalist readings of Scripture. For example, although most British evangelicals do not comfortably own the doctrine of inerrancy, they have at important times defended that doctrine, or positions virtually indistinguishable from it, as did James Packer in *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* (1958), and John Wenham in *Christ and the Bible* (1972, reprinted in 1993). Packer and Wenham both participated in the International Conference on Biblical Inerrancy in Chicago in 1978, Packer playing a large part in drawing up the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.[31]

Accordingly, some instances given in this chapter of fundamentalist approaches to Scripture come from people within the mainstream evangelical

[27] Roger E. Olson, *Reformed and Always Reforming: The Postconservative Approach to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), pp. 61–3.

[28] Olson, *Reformed and Always Reforming*, p. 25. Cf. Gary Dorrien, who writes: 'Evangelicals are prone to fret that everything will be lost if they have no ground of absolute certainty. . . . This fear drives them to impose impossible tests on Christian belief. Inerrancy or the abyss!' (*The Remaking of Evangelical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), p. 201).

[29] Olson, *Reformed and Always Reforming*, pp. 84–5.

[30] Alister E. McGrath, *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (Leicester: Apollos, 1996); Millard J. Erickson, *The Evangelical Left: Encountering Postconservative Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998); Olson, *Reformed and Always Reforming*, p. 61.

[31] The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy was issued in 1978. It affirmed the Bible to be 'entirely true in all it affirms', and 'entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions'. It is reprinted in James Packer's revised edition of *God has Spoken* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1979), pp. 149–55.

world, including the British evangelicals Packer, Wenham and Stott, and the Pentecostal theologian Wayne Grudem. I draw on their work not so as to label them 'fundamentalist', but because they provide helpfully clear examples of particular fundamentalist characteristics. That they do so is evidence that fundamentalist approaches to Scripture are present in various ways, albeit to varying degrees, amongst evangelicals.

Indeed, the many shades of evangelical that now exist across North America, Britain and Australasia describe themselves using terms that, while indicative of a number of factors, identify where they stand in relation to inerrantism: to believe in six-day creation is ultra-conservative (though it is becoming more mainstream amongst conservative evangelicals);[32] to be relaxed about Genesis but to maintain the possibility of harmonising the resurrection stories renders one 'conservative evangelical';[33] to engage 'in a process of "double listening" to the Bible and to the world, hearing the questions and the insights of others around us, and working to hear the message of the Scriptures in the light of this' is how 'open' evangelicals describe their approach;[34] to consider that theological or ideological aims rather than historical reportage have shaped the biblical narratives is part of what it means to be a 'radical' evangelical;[35] whilst to enquire more about narrative and paradigm than historicity, and to emphasise images and metaphors and indeterminacy of meaning is to be 'postconservative', 'post-modern' or even 'post-evangelical'.[36] These varieties of evangelicalism are not themselves our concern. Our concern is to characterise as best we can those fundamentalist notions of an error-free Bible with respect to which evangelicals describe themselves as 'conservative', 'open', 'radical' or 'post'.

[32] For example, Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, chap. 15, casts grave doubts on evolutionary theory that older conservatives such as Carl Henry, James Packer or John Stott would not have shared.

[33] For example, John Wenham, *Easter Enigma*, 2nd edn. (Guernsey: Paternoster, 1992).

[34] This is part of the definition offered by the Anglican theological training college Ridley Hall, in Cambridge, which defines itself as an open evangelical college: 'What does "Open Evangelical" actually mean?', www.ridley.cam.ac.uk/general.html#1.

[35] For example, Nigel Wright, *The Radical Evangelical: Seeking a Place to Stand* (London: SPCK, 1996).

[36] For example, Olson, *Reformed and Always Reforming*; Dorrien, *Remaking of Evangelical Theology*; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is there a Meaning in this Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Leicester: Apollos, 1998, 2008); Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1993); Dave Tomlinson, *The Post-Evangelical* (London: Triangle, 1995); David S. Dockery (ed.), *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995).

Inerrantism

Why the doctrine of inerrancy is so important within fundamentalism

The doctrine of inerrancy is so important within fundamentalism because when people think in a fundamentalist way they prioritise epistemology. Their leading question is 'How can we know?' to which their leading answer is 'We know because the Bible tells us so.' Their next question is, 'How can we know that we can trust the Bible?' to which they respond with the doctrines of plenary verbal inspiration (discussed further on) and inerrancy. They assume that errors or inconsistencies in the Bible jeopardise Christianity itself. Not that an authoritative Bible is needed to make Christianity true. Their point is an epistemological one: we need to *know* that the Bible is true before we can advance in faith or theology – 'faith in Jesus Christ is possible only where the truth concerning Him is known'.[37]

If they cannot know – if they cannot demonstrate that we can have certainty – then fundamentalists accept, in principle, that they lack the epistemic right to believe. In this regard they are children of the Enlightenment.

The association between fundamentalism and Enlightenment philosophy, most particularly Scottish Common Sense Realism, has been well established by historians and theologians.[38] This philosophy, pioneered by a moderate Presbyterian clergyman, Thomas Reid, influenced American public life in the eighteenth century, and continued to influence biblically conservative Christians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in the decades formative for the emergence of fundamentalist thinking. Reid would have been surprised to see the methods he employed in mental and moral philosophy being applied to religious belief and the authority of Scripture in the ways that fundamentalists came to apply them. Nevertheless, his philosophy assisted the development of three fundamentalist characteristics in particular, each of which helped generate the conviction that Christianity needs its Scriptures to be inerrant:

1. an empirical rationalist approach to Scripture, whereby the Bible's authority is defended by means of reason and the evidence for its reliability;

[37] Packer, *'Fundamentalism'*, p. 42.

[38] George Marsden in his authoritative history of fundamentalism, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), esp. pp. 55–62, 212–21; Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977); Vander Stelt, *Philosophy and Scripture*; Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals*, esp. chaps. 3 and 4.

2. an assumption that readers of Scripture are reading direct reports of actual states of affairs;
3. an inductive method of theology, according to which doctrines are inferred by gathering together biblical texts on any given topic.

Empirical rationalism

Commitment to reason and the provision of evidence has earned fundamentalism a reputation for 'rationalism'. 'Empirical rationalism' is a more fitting term, the point being made that a fundamentalist biblical apologetic rests the authority of Scripture on reason and evidence, and understands faith in terms of rational assent to true propositions.

B. B. Warfield, a New Testament scholar from Princeton Theological Seminary, insisted that although faith is a gift of God, it 'is yet formally conviction passing into confidence; and … all forms of conviction must rest on evidence as their ground, and it is not faith but reason which investigates the nature and validity of this ground'.[39]

Not all subsequent fundamentalists followed Warfield's evidentialist lead. Indeed, Warfield was not himself thoroughly consistent on this matter. Yet he did follow through, in principle, the conviction that should evidence show the original biblical manuscripts to contain errors, then Scripture is not inspired (from which it would follow that we do not have a foundation to our faith). He co-authored with A. A. Hodge the famous article of 1881 in which the doctrine of inerrancy was classically formulated. In this article Hodge and Warfield argued that a 'proved error in Scripture contradicts not only our doctrine [of inerrancy], but the Scripture claims and, therefore, its inspiration in making those claims'.[40] Warfield tested the inspiration of the biblical texts as we knew them, by use of the new methods of textual criticism being developed towards the end of the nineteenth century. He asserted that inspiration is not the first but the last claim we make about Scripture:

> We first prove [the Scriptures] authentic, historically credible, generally trustworthy, before we prove them inspired. And the proof of their authenticity, credibility, general trustworthiness would give us a firm basis for Christianity prior to any knowledge on our part of their inspiration, and apart indeed from the existence of inspiration.[41]

[39] B. B. Warfield, 'Apologetics', in Samuel Macauley Jackson (ed.), *The New Schaff–Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1908), reprinted in *Studies in Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1988), p. 15.
[40] Hodge and Warfield, 'Inspiration', p. 245.
[41] Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, p. 210.

Warfield persisted with his inductive approach because, influenced by Westcott and Hort, he thought that sound textual criticism was bringing critics close to unearthing the original manuscripts. He attempted to repristinate the autographs, which, he reasoned, would be inerrant because verbally inspired.

In fact, Hodge and Warfield's article is a fine example of how empirical lines of inquiry, conducted by inerrantists, generally find what they are looking for. An inerrantist who sets out to establish the accuracy and thereby the divine authorship of Scripture is likely to read, or interpret, texts in such a way that they appear as accurate or harmonious as possible. This does not mean always delivering a plain or literal reading. For example, John Wenham's *Easter Enigma* involves complex handling of biblical passages as he seeks to harmonise the resurrection narratives. Attempts to harmonise can even render interpretations that seem flatly to contravene a literal reading, as when Harold Lindsell suggested that Peter denied Jesus six times.[42]

By now it should be apparent why descriptions of fundamentalists as those who take the Bible literally, or as people who abrogate reason to divine revelation, fall wide of the mark. Fundamentalists are less interested in taking the Bible literally than they are in harmonising apparent inconsistencies or inaccuracies in Scripture, and they will sometimes abandon a literal reading in order to preserve a defence of inerrancy. In doing this, they are not simply abrogating reason to divine revelation. In some respects they are resting the verdict about divine revelation upon their investigative reasoning. It is true that frequently this investigative reasoning is performed in the context of an already accepted deductive argument that the Bible will not reveal any inconsistencies or inaccuracies because it is inspired by a God who does not err (see the section on deductive and inductive arguments). But either way, the authority of Scripture is, ironically, made to rest upon reason: upon inductive or deductive arguments that justify the place of Scripture as the fundament of faith.

Direct realism

Reid's Common Sense Realism was taken to provide intellectual reinforcement for the belief that in Scripture we have reliable accounts of actual states of affairs. Reid defended the common-sense belief that we perceive the outside world directly and not through intermediary ideas (as was the view of Locke and Hume), and therefore that our understanding of the world is not

[42] Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible*, pp. 175–6.

determined by subjective factors. He also argued that memory puts us in relation with the objects remembered, and not with our idea of those objects, and that testimony can be trusted (with certain qualifications) to tell us of actual events in the experience of others, rather than simply reflecting the reporter's point of view.

The appeal of his realist philosophy for later fundamentalist apologetics was that it could be used to support the conviction that the biblical records inform us not of ideas or interpretations of events, but of events themselves. This was a welcome antidote to the German Idealist influence behind higher criticism, which included Kant and Hegel in its ancestry. James Gresham Machen insisted that the 'Bible is quite useless unless it is a record of facts'.[43] His philosophical differences with modernists became intensely relevant in debates over the nature of Jesus' resurrection. Machen decried the modernist concern with 'the belief of the disciples in the resurrection' which refused to deal with 'whether the events really took place'.[44]

Inductive method in theology

Reid had developed his philosophy according to the principles of the early modern scientist Francis Bacon. He insisted that 'the true method of philosophising is this: from real facts, ascertained by observation and experiment, to collect by just induction the laws of Nature, and to apply the laws so discovered, to account for the phaenomena of Nature'.[45] At Princeton Theological Seminary Charles Hodge applied the Baconian method to 'theological science', the object of which was 'to systematize the facts of the Bible, and ascertain the principles or general rules which those facts involve'.[46]

Hodge's conception of theological method became the fundamentalist conception. This is the method that Wayne Grudem uses in his *Systematic Theology*, which, despite Grudem's own Pentecostal faith, provides the clearest and most systematic expression of a fundamentalist theology at the turn of the twenty-first century.[47] Biblical verses and passages are collected on a given topic and then the biblical position on that topic is inferred. The Bible

[43] Machen, *Christian Faith in the Modern World*, p. 65.
[44] James Gresham Machen, 'The Relation of Religion to Science and Philosophy', *Princeton Theological Review* 24 (January 1926), pp. 38–66, quoted in Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, pp. 216–17.
[45] Reid, *Works*, pp. 271–2.
[46] Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. I, p. 18.
[47] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*.

comes to be seen as the textbook of theology,[48] an image that owes little to Scripture itself,[49] and which betrays an assumption that theology is simply 'what the Bible says'. Indeed, Grudem defines systematic theology as *'any study that answers the question, "What does the whole Bible teach us today?" on any given topic'*.[50]

John Stott referred to 'Biblical induction' as 'the only safe way to begin theology'[51] – safe because it avoids personal bias and speculation. We might ask why we should bother with systematic theology at all when we can just read our Bibles. Grudem's response is that systematising biblical teaching helps us to learn it.[52] Grudem also says that the topics in his textbook can be read in any sequence; their persuasiveness should not be any different 'if they are rightly derived from Scripture'.[53] That he does not think in terms of a connectedness between doctrines other than their shared rootedness in Scripture is related to the fundamentalist supposition that faith and theology cannot proceed until the foundation of Scripture has been established. A fundamentalist biblical apologetic does not much draw upon theological resources for understanding the nature and authority of Scripture (such as doctrines of the Holy Spirit and of the church), since these resources are not available until the Bible has first been secured.

To sum up the discussion in this section: the doctrine of inerrancy is important to fundamentalists because they are primarily concerned with the epistemological grounds for Christian faith and theology. They believe that faith is significantly like knowledge, in that there must be adequate evidence in order for it to be justified. They look solely to the Bible to provide that evidence, and in turn they provide evidence, from the Bible itself, for the Bible's reliability (as will be shown in more detail in the next section). They regard much of the Bible as putting us directly in touch with the facts of an event, where these events have been reported by eyewitnesses. As we will see in the next section, they secure the reliability of the eyewitness accounts by arguing that God inspires the words in which they are written. They aim to establish the Bible as inerrant before they proceed any further with theology, and they then promote a theological method which works by collecting texts, like data, from this inerrant source.

[48] E.g. Packer, *'Fundamentalism'*, p. 112; John R. W. Stott, *I Believe in Preaching* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1982), p. 188.
[49] Barton, *People of the Book?*, p. 2.
[50] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 21.
[51] Stott, *I Believe*, p. 183.
[52] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 26–30.
[53] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 32.

Arriving at the doctrine of inerrancy

Plenary verbal inspiration

Fundamentalists arrive at the doctrine of inerrancy principally through their doctrine of inspiration. They argue not only that Scripture claims to be inspired, drawing on 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20–1, but that the inspiration is plenary and verbal: all of the words of Scripture are God's own words. They develop this model partly in order to combat the subjectivism that they see in liberal approaches to the Bible: 'It is the words that are inspired, not just the thoughts of a man who is attempting to write down a subjective experience.'[54]

They distinguish plenary verbal inspiration from an oracular or dictation model according to which the Bible would contain oracles of God. They emphasise that the human writers used contemporary literary conventions and their own personal styles, but that God protected them from error. This is such a fine line to tread that some fundamentalist scholars accept the language of dictation, and object only to 'mechanical dictation': 'Each writer was guided so that his choice of words was also the choice of the Holy Spirit, thus making the product the Word of God as well as the work of man. This definition disavows mechanical dictation, although some parts of revelation were given by direct dictation.'[55] There is sense in this distinction. A mechanical dictation theory would not serve a fundamentalist apologetic very well. As we have seen, central to a fundamentalist view of the Bible is the conviction that it gives us eyewitness accounts of events, especially in the Gospels. If the biblical authors were mere automata, then the fundamentalist emphasis upon the historical veracity of the reports and the reliability of the human testimony would need to be reconceived. But non-mechanical dictation, or plenary verbal inspiration, is important because it secures the reliability and truth of Scripture. God ensures that the authors got their facts right.

Deductive and inductive arguments for inerrancy

The doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration furnishes a deductive argument for the inerrancy of the Bible. If Scripture is inspired by God word for word, and God does not err, Scripture cannot err: 'the scriptures not only contain, but ARE THE WORD OF GOD, and hence … all their elements and all

[54] W. A. Criswell, *Great Doctrines of the Bible*, 8 vols., vol. 1: *Bibliology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), p. 101.

[55] Stanley E. Anderson, 'Verbal Inspiration Inductively Considered', in Ronald Youngblood (ed.), *Evangelicals and Inerrancy* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1955), pp. 13–21 at p. 13.

their affirmations are absolutely errorless';[56] 'the very words of the original texts, and not merely the general concepts or ideas, were inspired by God, and hence are free from error in their teachings'.[57] Wayne Grudem backs up such an argument with scriptural citations: 'All the words in the Bible are God's words. . . . The Bible clearly teaches that God cannot lie or speak falsely (2 Sam. 7:28; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). Therefore, all the words in Scripture are claimed to be completely true and without error in any part (Num. 23:19; Pss. 12:6; 119:89, 96; Prov. 30:5; Matt. 24:35).'[58] James Packer comes at the same point from behind: 'What is the cash-value of saying Scripture "inspires" and "mediates the Word of God", when we have constantly to allow for undetectable possibilities of error on the part of each biblical author?'[59]

Because of their commitment to this deductive principle, some fundamentalist apologists reject empirical tests to establish the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. Grudem argues that

> the words of Scripture are 'self-attesting'. They cannot be 'proved' to be God's words by appeal to any higher authority. For if an appeal to some higher authority (say, historical accuracy or logical consistency) were used to prove that the Bible is God's Word, then the Bible itself would not be our highest or absolute authority: it would be subordinate in authority to the thing to which we appealed to prove it to be God's Word.[60]

To the objection that this is a circular argument, Grudem fairly responds that 'all arguments for an absolute authority must ultimately appeal to that authority for proof'.[61]

However, the dominant fundamentalist strain has been in the direction of establishing the inspiration and therefore the inerrancy of Scripture on the grounds of historical accuracy and logical consistency, in just the ways that Grudem rejects:

> One should begin with Scripture as an ancient source book and grant it a high degree of accuracy. Based on the evidence it contains, one concludes that the miracles and resurrection of Jesus Christ are highly probable, that Christ is therefore who He claimed to be, and that therefore His testimony concerning the Scripture and the accrediting of His apostles as authoritative teachers is to be trusted; the Bible is to be received as the inspired, inerrant Word of God.

[56] Hodge and Warfield, 'Inspiration', p. 237.
[57] Davis, *Let the Bible Teach You*, p. 13.
[58] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 91.
[59] Packer, *God has Spoken*, p. 27.
[60] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 78.
[61] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 78 f.

> The highly reliable book at the beginning of the argument is discovered at the end of the argument to be the very Word of God, partaking of divine qualities that far transcend mere empiricist reliability.[62]

It was in such an inductivist vein that Warfield and Hodge sought empirical support for their doctrine of Scripture, and they always found it. They treated 'apparent affirmations presumably inconsistent with the present teachings of science, with facts of history, or with other statements of the sacred books themselves' on the presumption that actual error was impossible. They suggested that 'the original reading may have been lost, or … we may fail to realize the point of view of the author, or … we are destitute of the circumstantial knowledge which would fill up and harmonize the record'.[63] 'With these presumptions, and in this spirit' they laid down three important requirements:

1. let the alleged error be proved to have existed in the original autographs;
2. let the interpretation which occasions the apparent discrepancy be proved to be the 'one which the passage was evidently intended to bear'; and
3. 'let it be proved that the true sense of some part of the original autograph is directly and necessarily inconsistent with some certainly known fact of history, or truth of science, or some other statement of Scripture certainly ascertained and interpreted'.[64]

Since these demands are impossible to meet, Scripture is protected from charges of errancy.

Subsequent fundamentalist readings of Scripture reflect the tension between the deductive and empirical strands in Warfield and Hodge's account of inspiration and inerrancy. Scripture is bound to be inerrant, either by force of logic (because inspired by a God who does not err) or by the need to preserve an empirical defence. Either way, the distinctive feature and guiding principle of fundamentalist readings of the Bible is that they seek to uphold the doctrine of inerrancy.

[62] D. Clair Davis, 'Princeton and Inerrancy: The Nineteenth-Century Philosophical Background of Contemporary Concerns', in Hannah (ed.), *Inerrancy and the Church*, pp. 359–78 at p. 376.
[63] Hodge and Warfield, 'Inspiration', p. 237.
[64] Hodge and Warfield, 'Inspiration', p. 242.

PART III

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RECEPTION OF THE BIBLE GEOGRAPHICALLY

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Reception of the Bible: the Bible in Africa

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The reception of the Bible in Africa is both very ancient and very recent. North Africa forms part of the cradle that gave birth to the Bible, participating in the production of the Bible as we now have it. But the story in sub-Saharan or tropical Africa is quite different, with the Bible being a relatively recent arrival. That Africa can be divided in this way reflects the historical, geographical and ideological ambiguity of the designation 'Africa'.

Mediterranean North Africa

North Africa is part of the Mediterranean world in which the Bible was born. This is evident, for example, in the presence of Africans and Africa in the Bible. In the ancestral stories in Genesis of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Isaac, Rebekah and Jacob and his family, Egypt is a part of the setting, with these biblical characters moving in and out of Africa. But Africans are also characters in the Bible. Numbers 12:1, for example, may indicate that Moses had a second wife who came from Cush/Kush, a region in North Africa.[1] There is also the well known story of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon (1 Kings 10:1–3). This popular story is found not only in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, but also in the New Testament (Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:31), in Josephus' *Antiquities* (8.10.2 §158, 8.10.5–6 §§165–75), in the Qur'an (27.15–44) and in the Ethiopian national epic, *Kebra Negast* (Glory of the kings).[2]

Alongside this presence of Africa and Africans in the Bible is their impact on its formation and interpretation. Mediterranean Africa had a marked effect, both in terms of the actual formation of the Bible and in terms of its interpretation. For example, the sacred texts of the Jews travelled with the waves of

[1] Adamo, 'Ethiopia in the Bible'; Holter, *Yahweh in Africa*, pp. 93–114; Yamauchi, *Africa and the Bible*, pp. 35–75.
[2] Yamauchi, *Africa and the Bible*, pp. 100–5.

Jewish refugees displaced by the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 BCE and the Babylonian occupation of the southern kingdom of Judah in 587 BCE, with many of them settling in North Africa, along the Mediterranean coast from Libya in the west to Egypt in the east, and south along the Nile into Nubia/Sudan and Ethiopia.[3] Under the Ptolemies more Jews moved into Egypt and North Africa, some settling there for reasons of trade, while others were relocated prisoners of Ptolemaic wars in Palestine. By the first century CE it is estimated that Jews formed 10 to 15 per cent of the population in Egypt.[4] The Jewish community in Alexandria was among the most prominent of the Jewish Diaspora, producing a range of literature in Hebrew and Greek. Among the most significant for biblical reception was the Greek translation of Hebrew Scriptures, the Septuagint. The traditional story is that seventy-two or seventy (hence the shorthand LXX) learned Jews were sent to Egypt at the request of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246 BCE) to translate the Jewish law (Torah, the Pentateuch) into Greek for the library in Alexandria.

The advent of the Roman empire, like the Greek empire it consumed and replaced, had a marked impact on Mediterranean North Africa and on its reception of the Bible. With the eventual conquest of Carthage, a Phoenician colony, in about 146 BCE, North Africa became part of the Roman empire. Indeed, the designation 'Africa' probably derives from Roman usage.[5] North African Judaism, as part of a wider Jewish response to unjust Roman government and the corrosive effect of Hellenistic cultural hegemony, made its contribution, with Alexandria once again being a site of biblical production and interpretation, and with scholars such as Philo (20 BCE–CE 50), an Alexandrian Jew, using a fusion of biblical and Platonic philosophical traditions to defend his community and Judaism against Roman anti-Semitic attitudes and attacks.[6]

It is not clear how and when Christianity came to Roman North Africa, but what is clear is that there were distinctive features in this form of Christianity, some of which derived from local religious and cultural traditions and some of which are directly related to their interpretation of the Bible.[7] For example, sustained Roman persecution of Christianity, considered by Romans a religion of 'the servile classes'[8] and of 'social outcasts and

[3] Schaaf (ed.), *On their Way Rejoicing*, p. 4.
[4] Isichei, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 16.
[5] Yamauchi, *Africa and the Bible*, p. 40.
[6] Saldarini, 'Jewish Responses', p. 407.
[7] Tilley, *The Donatist World*, p. 20.
[8] Dungan, *Constantine's Bible*, p. 124.

traitors who reject our [Greek and Roman] ancient and proud cultural heritage',[9] led to differing responses from Christian communities, among which were the Donatists of North Africa. A number of North African and Libyan bishops, including Donatus, claimed that only they had remained true to the Christian God and 'confessed Christ' during the Great Persecution, even though it usually meant torture and exile or death. Other priests and bishops, they claimed, had bowed to Roman pressure and had performed sacrifices to the Roman gods, thus betraying Christ and the Christian God.[10] But the surest sign that they were *traditores* ('betrayers') was that they had 'handed over' the Holy Scriptures to be burned in order to placate the demands of the pagan state![11] Later, when confronted by the emissaries of the emperor Constantine, the Donatists again resisted incorporation, proclaiming: 'You come with edicts of emperors, we hold nothing in our hands but volumes of scriptures.'[12]

The Scriptures continued to play an important part in African receptions of the Bible through the work of North African theologians such as Tertullian (*c.* 160–*c.* 212),[13] Origen (185–254),[14] Cyprian (*c.* 200–58)[15] and Augustine (354–430).[16] But these were all Africans of a particular kind, oriented as they were to the Mediterranean world. Further inland other Africans were also engaging with the Bible.

Coptic, Nubian and Ethiopian North Africa

While the city of Alexandria looked north to the cosmopolitan Mediterranean and Greek cultural world, the rural regions of Egypt, with its emerging Coptic language and culture, looked to the desert hinterland. Eusebius suggests that the see of Alexandria was founded by St Mark the Evangelist in 68 CE while preaching the gospel there, and while the Coptic Orthodox Church still counts St Mark as their founder, it is the 'era of the martyrs' brought about by the accession of Diocletian (284) that inaugurated Coptic church history. Even today, the Coptic calendar begins not with the birth of Christ

[9] Dungan, *Constantine's Bible*, p. 57.
[10] Dungan, *Constantine's Bible*, p. 104.
[11] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 26; Tilley, *The Donatist World*, p. 10.
[12] Isichei, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 37.
[13] Tilley, *The Donatist World*, pp. 20–8.
[14] Tilley, *The Donatist World*, pp. 50–1.
[15] Tilley, *The Donatist World*, pp. 28–41.
[16] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 24.

but with 284 CE.[17] And it is this foundational experience which indelibly characterises their biblical interpretation.

Further south, and only recently uncovered archaeologically (1959–69), the thousand years (*c.* 450–1450) of Nubia's Christian history remain something of a mystery.[18] Northern Nubia was probably first made aware of Christianity in about 450, possibly by Coptic monks or Coptic refugees who were making their way along the Nile.[19] To a much larger extent than in Egypt, Nubia's church history was that of kings and the aristocracy, and it is not clear to what extent Christianity was embraced by the masses.[20]

Just as the Nile facilitated the expansion of Christianity from the delta region to Upper Egypt and to the three kingdoms of Nubia, so the Red Sea enabled contact between the Semitic peoples of the south-western Arabian coast and the northern Cushite communities of Ethiopia (or Aksum). For at least a thousand years before Christ, people had migrated from southern Arabia into northern Ethiopia.[21] In this region, as in most others, the spread of Christianity was largely due to traders and refugees, though church history tends to notice those with formal authority, such as Frumentius, a traveller who was taken into the court of King Ella-Amida at Aksum, where he enabled a Christian presence to be established. He was later, between 341 and 346, consecrated as bishop of the Church in Ethiopia by Patriarch Athanasius of Egypt. The ecclesiastical links between Egypt and Ethiopia would last for another 1,600 years.[22]

Though significantly diverse, there are many 'family resemblances' with respect to biblical interpretation across Mediterranean North African and Coptic, Nubian and Ethiopian North Africa. Common to these northern parts of Africa was and is an emphasis on the intratextual unity of Scripture and its allegorical and typological relevance to the Christian community. All of Scripture, as well as the lives of saints and martyrs, is primarily about instructing the believer in the spiritual life. Though similar elements can be found in African biblical reception in sub-Saharan Africa, there was little direct contact between them. Geography was a part of the problem. The eastern regions of North Africa had the two parallel waterways of the River Nile and the Red Sea along which travel could easily take place from Egypt south and east through

[17] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, pp. 10–11.
[18] Isichei, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 30.
[19] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 30.
[20] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 32.
[21] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 35.
[22] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 35.

Nubia and Ethiopia, but the western areas of North Africa were populated only along a narrow coastal belt, separated from the interior by impenetrable forests and the deserts.[23] Language too was a problem. In the western areas of North Africa, for example, the orientation in the church was to Greek and Latin, and not to Berber. Indeed, the overall socio-cultural and theological orientation across North Africa, when it was not turned inwards, was towards the north and east, not towards the south.

But other factors were also at work. In 426 Augustine writes of 'hordes of African barbarians, plundering and destroying',[24] and a few years later, in 429, the Vandal king, Gaiseric, brought his Gothic tribe across France and Spain and into North Africa, conquering Carthage in 439 and settling in Tunisia, where they ruled for more than a century. Having adopted an Arian form of Christianity on their way across Europe, they persecuted Catholics and Donatists in North Africa.[25] The Vandals were themselves overthrown by the Byzantine emperor Justinian in 533, and left no lasting influence, though they did substantially weaken Roman African Christianity, allowing for the resurgence of independent Christian Berber kingdoms. Byzantine North Africa was larger than the Vandal kingdom, though smaller than Roman North Africa, but by the seventh century there are archaeological signs that this Christian empire too was in decline.[26] Then, in 639, seven years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, an Arab force invaded Egypt. At this stage it was not clear that Islam was a new religion, with many regarding the 'Ishmaelites' as a Christian sect. The Arabs conquered Byzantine Africa between 670 and 750, with most of the resistance coming from independent Berbers. North-west Africa, which the Arabs called 'the Maghrib' (the west), gradually lost its Christian identity, weakened by internal sectarian divisions, class conflict between the wealthy clergy and the poor masses, an urban Christian–rural traditional religion divide, and successive invasions. In addition, north-west Africa lacked a monastic tradition, which did so much to sustain Christianity in Egypt and Ethiopia. But even in the east the Christian majority in Egypt began to decline, due in part to successive waves of Arab Muslim immigration and persecution under the Mamluks, from the mid-thirteenth to the early sixteenth centuries, which in turn was fuelled by the aggression of the Crusaders, who, at various times, proposed blockading the Red Sea, or diverting the Nile.[27]

[23] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 29.
[24] Isichei, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 42.
[25] Isichei, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 42; Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 28.
[26] Isichei, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 42.
[27] Isichei, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 42.

The spread of Islam in Arabia, Egypt, Nubia and throughout the Near East led to increasing isolation for Christian Ethiopia. Even though 'Ethiopia' now extended much further south than Aksum had done, its thoroughly African yet 'primitive' Christianity, with strong Hebraic influences, remained confined, in the main, to Ethio-Semitic-speaking peoples of the highlands. The early relationships between Muslims and Christians were amiable, with the king of Aksum giving sanctuary to some of the first Muslims who were fleeing from a hostile Mecca, and Muslim merchants settling on the coastal plains. However, peaceful coexistence gave way to war in the early sixteenth century, when a dynamic Muslim leader, Imam Ahmad, arose in Adal, to the east, and nearly succeeded in overthrowing the Christian kingdom.[28] It was at this juncture that Ethiopia came into contact with Portuguese emissaries, and though Ethiopia was deeply ambivalent, both desiring European assistance and fearing 'the threat to their religion and independence', they accepted Portuguese support in defeating Ahmad's forces in 1543.[29] This ambivalence to the emerging European presence in Africa would characterise how Africans engaged with the Bible further south, where Christianity and the Bible had yet to arrive.

Sub-Saharan or tropical Africa

'The first Portuguese ships anchored off the coast of [the] west-central African kingdom of Kongo in 1483.'[30] So begins the story of modern European interest in Africa. Slavery was the initial and, for long periods, the sustaining interest in Africa. The first black Africans had already been sold into slavery in Portugal in the 1440s as a result of Henry the Navigator's explorations of the Atlantic coast. From 1490 to 1530 between 300 and 2,000 slaves were brought annually to Lisbon from as far south as the Upper and Lower Guinea coast.[31] But the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and the news that the Hagia Sophia had been turned into a mosque, together with significant technological advancements in seafaring, precipitated the search for a new passage to the East over the seas.[32] The interest in Africa now extended to a series of places along the coast to replenish supplies on the way to somewhere else. But gradually interest shifted to the interior, in search of still more slaves and other commodities desired by European empires.

[28] Isichei, *Christianity in Africa*, pp. 46–51.
[29] Isichei, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 51.
[30] Isichei, *Christianity in Africa*, p. 45.
[31] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 42.
[32] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 42.

The arrival of the Bible

While the Bible has always, in some sense, been associated with North Africa, the same is not true for sub-Saharan Africa. The Bible was brought to these parts of Africa relatively recently, initially (1415–1787) with the wave of explorers, traders and ecclesial representatives of the medieval Catholic Church, directed by Portugal. In 1493 Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia), a Spaniard, divided the world in two, assigning the west to Spain and the east, including Africa, to Portugal.[33] King Manuel 'the Great' (1495–1521), aided by a form of missionary tribunal made up of theologians and members of the orders of knighthood, embarked on a national–ecclesiastical enterprise in which Africa was a resource to be consumed by '*conquista* Christianity'.[34] Crusading for 'pepper and souls', in the words of Vasco da Gama, this emergent *conquista* idea of Christian mission took root along the coastlines of Africa and India, incorporating both political and spiritual conquest.[35] Slave and trade posts, with chaplains in attendance, were established at various strategic sites on the West African coast, at the mouth of the Zaïre River (providing access to the Kongo), at Mpinda in Soyo, at Luanda in Angola, at the Cape, at a number of sites on the East African coast, and at Massawa in Ethiopia.[36]

This first wave of European mission, characterised by a particular form of imperial Christianity, was followed by a second wave, characterised at first by 'literally hundreds of European conquests of Africa',[37] and then by the more systematic European 'scramble' for Africa, precipitated by the Berlin Congress of 1885.[38] The Roman Catholic mission presence in western, central and southern Africa in the late 1700s and the early 1800s was almost entirely French (with an Italian Catholic presence along the Nile in north-east Africa). Besides being the vanguard of French trade and colonialism, an explicit aspect of their missionary work was to teach their converts and inspire in them 'a great affection for the Fathers of the Church in Africa'.[39] The formation of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in 1662, and the founding of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith in 1822 gave further impetus to Catholic mission.[40] During this same period vast numbers of Protestant missionaries moved into Africa, and while some were independent

[33] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 44.
[34] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, pp. 44–5.
[35] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 45.
[36] Isichei, *Christianity in Africa*, pp. 52–73; Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, pp. 45–80.
[37] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 97.
[38] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 97.
[39] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 105.
[40] Sugirtharajah, 'Postcolonial Exploration', p. 103.

of direct support by a missionary organisation, the majority belonged to an array of missionary societies, so that by 1910 there were an estimated one and half million European Protestant Christians in sub-Saharan Africa.[41] The impetus for this Protestant missionary movement into Africa was the formation of a number of missionary agencies: the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (1698), the Baptist Missionary Society (1792), the London Missionary Society (1795), the Church Missionary Society (1799), the Wesleyan Methodist Society (1813) and the Netherlands Missionary Society (1797).

As the slave trade began to be replaced by trade in other goods towards the end of the nineteenth century, a shift brought about as much by the agricultural efforts of the large slave populations in West Africa as by the abolitionist movement,[42] so the European missionary imagination sought to emulate and cooperate with companies such as the East India Company and the Dutch East India Company.[43] As Catholic imperial control of the seas loosened, so the way was cleared for Protestant Holland and England to construct their empires, inspired by the possibilities of trade and their newly rediscovered, post-Reformation, Bible.[44] Precipitated, perhaps, by the Baptist William Carey's (1761–1834) interpretation of Matthew 28:19 as a command to preach the gospel in distant lands,[45] the Protestant missionary movement was also inspired by a number of other biblical texts which were interpreted as a mandate to explore, convert, civilise and colonise. It was not until this period of Protestant mission, for example, that the book of Acts was read as containing a missionary-journey pattern and mandate.[46]

This second wave, of modern nineteenth-century Catholic and Protestant missionary and imperial Christianity (1787–1919), did not find an undisturbed territory. Sub-Saharan Africa was already in flux, with large population movements and migrations across the subcontinent, propelled by the innumerable incursions from the African coast for slaves and by local struggles for control of resources, such as the *Mfecane* in southern Africa, in which the rise of King Shaka and the expansion of the Zulu state in the eastern region of southern Africa, the resistance of African chiefdoms to the efforts of the Portuguese at Delagoa Bay who were pushing south in the search for slaves, and raiding parties of Griquas and Bergenaars from the south to meet the demand for

[41] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 84.
[42] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, pp. 97–8.
[43] Sugirtharajah, 'Postcolonial Exploration', p. 103.
[44] Sugirtharajah, 'Postcolonial Exploration', p. 104.
[45] Sugirtharajah, 'Postcolonial Exploration', p. 96.
[46] Sugirtharajah, 'Postcolonial Exploration', pp. 100–1.

bonded labour in the Cape Colony set up a series of chain reactions among neighbouring clans.[47] Not only did these movements of Africans themselves become carriers of Christianity and the Bible, but the social upheavals generated both by external and internal forces produced a whole range of dislocated groups and individuals who were willing to engage with the new formations brought about by Christianity, its book and other associated goods of power.

The third wave (1920–59) of missionary–colonial influence in sub-Saharan Africa is closely related to the second, but can be considered as the transition from a colonial period to that of the independent African state. While the First and Second World Wars had a significant impact on Africa – particularly the First World War, much of which was fought on African soil, drawing millions of Africans into the conflict, either directly as soldiers or indirectly as carriers and labourers[48] – these two 'white men's wars' destabilised and ultimately deconstructed the European myth of empire and civilisation. In the wake of the First World War the 'Missionary Popes', Benedict XV and Pius XI, stressed the need for an educated African clergy who would take over the leadership of the churches in their respective countries.[49] Up until the early 1900s 90 per cent of all village education was mission schooling, whether Catholic or Protestant, and the form this schooling took was an extension of the catechumens' class. However, this changed between 1920 and 1945, when schools became the concern of colonial governments, intent on training a loyal native elite who would form the core of a native administration.[50] Across villages and towns in sub-Saharan Africa, first the mission-educated African and then the African educated by the colonial government 'began to act as a local or regional centre of opposition'.[51] Some became the leaders of missionary established churches, others founded African Independent Churches, and others founded liberation movements, each in their own diverse ways providing sites of opposition and resistance. Central to each site was a foundational vernacular book, the Bible, and through it African Christianity began 'to talk back' to power.

Throughout these waves of imperialism and mission the Bible was present, playing a variety of roles, from iconic object of power, to aural authority, to vernacular textbook, to the medicine of God's Word, to political weapon of struggle. Though the forms of its reception and interpretation are as diverse and distinct as the particular African contexts within which it was engaged,

[47] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness*, pp. 167–9.
[48] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, pp. 610–12.
[49] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 626.
[50] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, pp. 636–7.
[51] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*, p. 608.

there are significant family resemblances to the reception of the Bible in sub-Saharan Africa.

African autonomy transacting with the Bible

In most African contexts in which the Bible was first encountered Africans were firmly in control. The traders, explorers and missionaries who were the first to bring bibles among African peoples were themselves the vanguard of the colonial infrastructure that would follow them. But in most cases the full force of colonialism was some distance off, so that these traders, explorers and missionaries were part of a landscape with which they were unfamiliar and over which local African clans were in control. This is expressed clearly in a letter written by the missionary John Campbell, who had been sent by the London Missionary Society to southern Africa in 1812, when he says that he and his companions were 'completely in their power'; and he was particularly disconcerted by the freedom with which the Tlhaping people 'narrowly inspected us, made remarks upon us, and without ceremony touched us'.[52] Their movements were constantly monitored, and where and when they went was controlled by the leadership of the Tlhaping people.[53]

African transactions with the Bible and Christianity (and indeed Islam) took place, initially, on African terms. In a significant sense, therefore, the relatively recent changes brought about by the advent of Christianity (and the Bible) in sub-Saharan Africa need to be placed within 'the long span of African history'.[54] African society was never static and so, long before Europe showed an interest in Africa, African societies were subject to change, even religious change, as they transacted with each other. Trade was common across sub-Saharan Africa, but it was not only material goods that flowed across chiefdoms in the region. Ritual expertise was also sought after, with many local leaders recruiting 'rain-makers', for example, sometimes from far afield.[55] This kind of exchange, it has been argued, gradually brought about a shift within some African societies as they moved from life in confined, small-scale settings, symbolised by local or ancestral spirits, into a wider social sphere, symbolised by the Supreme Being of African Traditional Religion. Religious change, on this

[52] J. Campbell, Klaarwater, 26 July 1813 [CWM. Africa. South Africa. Incoming correspondence. Box 5-2-D]. Here and in the following CWM is the Council for World Mission, whose papers are housed at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

[53] Campbell, *Travels in South Africa*, pp. 199–200.

[54] Peel, *The Making of the Yoruba*, p. 3.

[55] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness*, pp. 163–4.

account, is rooted in an already existing African religious paradigm, which includes both local ancestral spirits and the Supreme Being.[56] As African communities come into closer contact with one another, so the common belief in a Supreme Being gains priority over local ancestral spirits, but as local concerns come to predominate in particular instances, so the ancestral spirits gain priority over the Supreme Being.

What the advent of the monotheistic religions, Christianity and Islam, contributed to already existing patterns of African change were highly developed notions of the Supreme Being and a rapid increase in social scale. In an important sense, African transactions with the Bible were part of an ongoing, albeit accelerated, process of cognitive and practical adjustment to changes in their social experience, within the terms of an existing paradigm.[57]

The Bible as an object of 'strange power'

The Bible was simply one among the many objects with which Africans transacted as they engaged with European traders, explorers and missionaries (and other later colonial agents). In their initial transactions with European traders, some of whom were also missionaries, whether officially or unofficially, the Bible was an object of little significance. For example, in the earliest encounters between the Tlhaping people of southern Africa and Europeans the dominant interest was trade. In the early 1800s Chief Molehabangwe had a consuming interest in potential lines of trade and alliance with the Cape Colony, so much so that the first missionaries who visited his community were simply treated as traders, and nothing more. He showed no interest at all in Christianity. That these first missionaries, Jan Matthys Kok and William Edwards, earned their living by trading, having only a tenuous relationship with the Suid-Afrikaanse Sendinggenootskap (SASG, South African missionary organisation), served to confirm Molehabangwe's impression that they were traders. Though the SASG did send the gift of a bible to Molehabangwe in 1802, it does not appear to have been acknowledged by him. He was more concerned about the possibilities of trade with the Cape Colony to the south.[58]

Missionaries were an important part of the great chain of trade which linked Molehabangwe and the Tlhaping to the Cape Colony, its goods and the world beyond. Such was the conviction of the Tlhaping that the missionaries

[56] Horton, 'African Conversion'; Peel, *The Making of the Yoruba*, p. 3.
[57] Peel, *The Making of the Yoruba*, p. 3.
[58] Du Bruyn, 'Die Tlhaping'; du Bruyn, *Aanvangsjare*.

were really just traders that Molehabangwe's son, Mothibi, would say to the missionary John Campbell 'that whenever the missionaries have got enough they shall be at liberty to depart'. Campbell was appalled by this, in his view, misconception. He comments in a letter to the London Missionary Society that during his visit Chief Mothibi was 'still [in 1813] supposing trade a part of their [the missionaries'] object'. 'He cannot indeed', continues Campbell, 'yet think otherwise from the example of Kok and Edwards.'[59]

From the beginning, however, part of the attraction of whites to the Tlhaping 'flowed from the mystical qualities attributed to them and their things in a hinterland where raids were endemic and where guns, beads, and tobacco had become prime valuables'.[60] Tobacco, along with beads and knives, were prized objects of exchange and trade, obtaining their power both from their intrinsic value to the Tlhaping (whether utilitarian or aesthetic) and the increasingly complex trade transactions the Tlhaping were participating in.[61] Guns, like tobacco, were greatly desired by the Tlhaping, but were much more difficult to extract from missionaries and traders because of their scarcity and a reluctance to arm local peoples (unless of course this suited colonial objectives). The power of the gun, the 'most condensed source of European power',[62] is easily understood. Besides the threat to life the gun posed, possessing a gun signalled some contact or alliance with missionary–colonial forces, an association that was in itself a powerful protection against attack from neighbouring groups, including other indigenous peoples and white (mainly Boer) settlers.

Mirrors, watches and telescopes are more problematic with respect to determining their power. Missionaries clearly believed that these goods demonstrated the superiority of their culture and civilisation, and so they were either constantly exhibiting or consistently hiding them. What is certain is that 'none of these objects was introduced into a void, and while they brought novel values into the Tswana world, they also acquired meanings different from those intended by their donors'.[63]

This is certainly true of the Bible. Another pre-colonial visitor to the Tlhaping was William Burchell, and, though no missionary, for he was an explorer and observer, a proto-anthropologist, he did bring a bible among his

[59] J. Campbell, Klaarwater, 26 July 1813 [CWM. Africa. South Africa. Incoming correspondence. Box 5-2-D].
[60] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness*, p. 179.
[61] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness*, pp. 183–4.
[62] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness*, p. 201.
[63] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness*, p. 184.

goods. While he generally kept his bible in his wagon, there was one occasion, during his visit in 1812, the whole of which was carefully watched by the Tlhaping, watching as they were being observed, in which he demonstrated the Bible's power in a public and dramatic manner. Burchell's public use of the Bible was sparked by his decision to discipline one of his employees. Van Roye, one of Burchell's hired 'Hottentots', had consistently shown disrespect and open defiance to Burchell, refusing to obey legitimate orders. 'It became therefore unavoidable', says Burchell in his journal, 'to take serious notice of his conduct; and I immediately ordered all my men to be present at the waggons, and declared that it was now my intention to punish his disobedience; but that I would first hear, in the presence of all, what he had to say in his defence.' Among those present, besides Burchell's immediate party, were Mothibi and the leadership of the Tlhaping, 'whose whole attention was fixed on us'.[64] What they watched was a formal trial, conducted by Burchell, of Van Roye.

Having laid out his pistols and sword on the chest in his wagon, 'to impress more strongly on my people the serious nature of the affair',[65] he then 'produced a Dutch Testament, and as Van Roye could read tolerably well, I bade him take notice what book it was'.[66] 'With some formality' Burchell used the Bible in order to administer 'the usual *oath* to relate the truth'. However, the prevarications of Van Roye pushed him to expound on the oath-taking ritual just enacted:

> Seeing this, I admonished him of the dreadful crime which he would commit by uttering a falsity at the moment when he called God to witness his veracity: I explained to him in the most solemn and impressive manner, the respect which he as a Christian ought to show to that book; and that it was better he should at once condemn himself by confessing his fault in the presence of his companions, than by prevarication and wilful misrepresentation, pronounce his own condemnation in the presence of God, to whom all our actions and thoughts were known.[67]

Sensing that these admonitions had 'had their proper effect upon him' and that 'a few words more would decide him to confess that he was blameable', Burchell reiterated his use of the Bible as symbol by asking Van Roye to once again 'lay his hand on the book', but this time only 'after repeating to him

[64] Burchell, *Travels in the Interior*, vol. II, p. 468.
[65] Burchell, *Travels in the Interior*, vol. II, p. 468.
[66] Burchell, *Travels in the Interior*, vol. II, p. 470.
[67] Burchell, *Travels in the Interior*, vol. II, p. 470.

the substance of several passages in the New Testament'. These acts and exhortations had the desired effect, and Van Roye confessed that his conduct had not been 'influenced by the spirit of obedience which that book taught and commanded a servant to show to a master'.[68]

His own men, Burchell writes in his journal, 'had received a useful lesson';[69] but what lesson had Mothibi and the Tlhaping learned? Clearly the Bible had come to assume considerable power through this ritual. It was an object much like the sword and the gun; it had the power to instil fear and obedience, whether closed or opened. It had the capacity to speak.

Some years later the Tlhaping were to encounter the Bible again, this time in the hands of missionaries. John Campbell, a director of the London Missionary Society, had been commissioned and sent to the Cape in 1812 in order 'to survey the progress and prospects of mission work in the interior'.[70] Campbell arrived in Dithakong on 24 June 1813, ten months after Burchell had left. Chief Mothibi was away at the time, and so Campbell and his companions were made to wait, forbidden to 'instruct the people'. While they waited Campbell had a conversation with Mmahutu, senior wife of Mothibi, using the opportunity of her presence 'to convey some information' to her.[71]

What followed was a remarkable exchange, capturing the Bible as iconic object of power and an aural text of power. Campbell records this encounter with the Bible as follows:

> We explained to her the nature of a letter, by means of which a person could convey his thoughts to a friend at a distance. Mr. A. shewed her one he had received from his wife, by which he knew every thing that had happened at Klaar Water for two days after he left it. This information highly entertained her, especially when told that A. Kok, who brought it, knew nothing of what it contained, which we explained by telling her the use of sealing wax. The bible being on the table gave occasion to explain the nature and use of a book, particularly of that book – how it informed us of God, who made all things; and of the beginning of all things, which seemed to astonish her, and many a look was directed towards the bible.[72]

Here the missionaries draw Mmahutu's attention to the power of the letter in at least two respects. First, an object like this can re-present 'every thing' that happened in a place in a person's absence. Second, an object like this can be

[68] Burchell, *Travels in the Interior*, vol. II, pp. 470–1.
[69] Burchell, *Travels in the Interior*, vol II, p. 471.
[70] Campbell, *Travels in South Africa*, p. 178.
[71] Campbell, *Travels in South Africa*, p. 199.
[72] Campbell, *Travels in South Africa*, p. 199.

made to hide its message from the bearer and reveal its contents only to the intended receiver. Turning from the letter, to a quite different genre of text (from the perspective of the missionaries), the Bible, but here conflated with the letter (from the perspective of Mmahutu), the missionaries use the interest generated in their exposition of the letter to return to their preoccupation with the contents of the Bible, particularly the matter of origins.

That books in general and the Bible in particular were presented by Europeans and perceived by Africans as objects of iconic and aural power is clear across sub-Saharan Africa. 'My books puzzled them', writes the missionary Robert Moffat, speaking of southern Africa peoples, 'They asked if they were my "Bola," prognosticating dice.'[73] In East Africa, when Chief Mamkinga of the Chagga people of what is now Tanzania asked the missionaries who had come among them in May 1849 where they obtained their distinctive items, such as the umbrella, the blanket, the candle and the gun, the missionary John Rebmann took his Bible in his hand and said 'that it was to that book that we "Wasungu", Europeans, owed the things he had seen'.[74] The chief drew nearer and took Rehmann's Bible in his own hands, and started 'turning its leaves to and fro' with great interest.[75]

Vernacular translation of the Bible

But Christian missionaries to Africa were not content with the Bible as an iconic and aural object of power. It must become a book read by Africans in their own vernaculars. So among the most urgent tasks undertaken by missionaries in Africa was the translation of the Bible into the vernacular.

However, prior to the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804 both the supply of and access to the Bible were severely limited.[76] Indeed, there was grave doubt that any vernacular, in the words of Archbishop Berthold of Mentz (in 1486), 'was capable of expressing what great authors have written in Greek and Latin of the high mysteries of the Christian faith'.[77] The 1408 Oxford Convocation prohibited anyone from translating or even possessing an English version of the Bible without the licence of the bishop, and no English translation appeared until Tyndale's version was printed in 1525. But having a bible in English did not mean that ordinary people had access to it. For example, in 1530 King Henry VIII made it illegal for ordinary

[73] Moffat, *Missionary Labours*, p. 384.
[74] Magomba, 'Gogo People of Tanzania', p. 60.
[75] Magomba, 'Gogo People of Tanzania', p. 60.
[76] Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, p. 51.
[77] Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, p. 46.

women and working-class men to read the Bible for themselves, though noble women were permitted 'to reade to themselves alone and not to others'.[78] And even when ordinary people were permitted to read a vernacular bible for themselves there were very few available. The 1611 King James Bible, for example, had its supply regulated and controlled, with no more than 5,000 copies per print run for each of the five editions it went through before 1640.[79] The few copies that were available were also costly; when the Scottish missionary Mungo Park visited The Gambia in the late 1700s he came across an Arabic translation of the Pentateuch which cost the equivalent of a prime slave.[80]

However, Protestant convictions concerning the sufficiency of Scripture – its authority over tradition, its capacity as the incorruptible Word to ward off human error – gradually shifted the Bible from the institutional to the private sphere, hence the mass campaign encouraging people to read it in the vernacular. As the slogan asserted, 'Protestants without Bibles are soldiers without weapons, ready neither for conquest nor for defence.'[81]

So with the rise of the modern missionary movement in the late 1700s, a product both of emerging European imperialism and evangelical piety, one of the aims of the British and Foreign Bible society was 'to make these Holy Writings known, in every nation and in every tongue, and, as far as may be, to render them the actual possession of every individual on the face of the whole earth'.[82]

Returning to the example of the Tlhaping, it was already clear in the visit of Campbell in 1813 that translation of the Bible was a central concern.[83] Robert Moffat's arrival in 1821 gave substance to Campbell's promise to Mothibi that the Bible would be translated into their own language.[84] A London Missionary Society visitor to Moffat's mission station in Kuruman in 1849 comments in a letter that 'Mr. Moffat's time seems mainly occupied in translation of the scriptures'.[85] Moffat's dedication to the translation of the Bible into Setswana was predicated on two related convictions: first, in the words of Reverend Hughes, cited by Moffat, that 'the simple reading and study of the Bible alone will convert the world', for which it was required of the missionary 'to gain for

[78] Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, p. 47.
[79] Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, p. 50.
[80] Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, p. 50.
[81] Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, p. 52.
[82] Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, p. 53.
[83] Campbell, *Travels in South Africa*, p. 192.
[84] Campbell, *Travels in South Africa*, pp. 208–9.
[85] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness*, p. 214.

it [the Bible] admission and attention, and then let it speak for itself';[86] second, in the words of Moffat himself, that this one language, Setswana, 'with slight variations, is spoken as far as the Equator'.[87] So that once the Bible was translated and once the Tlhaping were taught to read, they and then the chain of 'scattered towns and hamlets' towards the interior would have 'in their hands the means not only of recovering them from their natural darkness, but of keeping the lamp of life burning even amidst comparatively desert gloom'.[88]

Three things are clear from Moffat's commitment to the translation project at Kuruman, and many other translation sites around sub-Saharan Africa. First, there was the basic assumption that translation could indeed take place. So, for example, in the case of the Tlhaping most of the earliest 'conversation' took place through the mediation of Griquas, operating between English, Dutch and Setswana, and with a less than fluent grasp of any. In addition to the constraints of the actual languages themselves, there was also the constant presence of cultural 'noise'. None of the actors in these early encounters was neutral; all had something to gain from the encounter.[89] Yet despite these very real limitations, Moffat 'believed' that communication of the most vital and sacred matters could take place. Second, because of these constraints in conversation, Moffat, like many other missionaries, was committed to learn the local language for himself. And while many missionaries held naive views about the 'simplicity' of African languages, Moffat was aware of just how difficult it was to learn the language proficiently,[90] but he was determined to do so. An additional factor in Moffat's pursuit of proficiency was his conviction that '[a] missionary who commences giving direct instruction to the natives, though far from being competent in the language, is proceeding on safer ground than if he were employing an interpreter, who is not proficient in both languages and who has not a tolerable understanding of the doctrines of the Gospel'. He goes on to say that 'trusting in an ignorant and unqualified interpreter, is attended with consequences . . . dangerous to the very objects which lie nearest the missionary's heart'.[91] Third, though Moffat was disparaging about the linguistic and theological competence of the Tlhaping themselves, he did not question 'the potential of their language to bear the meanings that civilization [and particularly the Gospel] might demand of it'.[92]

[86] Moffat, *Missionary Labours*, p. 618.
[87] Moffat, *Missionary Labours*, p. 618.
[88] Moffat, *Missionary Labours*, p. 618.
[89] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness*, p. 216.
[90] Moffat, *Missionary Labours*, pp. 291–2.
[91] Moffat, *Missionary Labours*, pp. 293–4.
[92] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness*, p. 217.

While Moffat, like most of the missionaries, was a product of the prejudices of his people, his translation project did allow Africans to engage with the Bible on their own terms. The Bible would 'speak for itself', but, like the letter Campbell showed to Mmahutu, the Bible would not always speak as the ones who carried it anticipated. Moffat himself, like many other missionaries, had minimal theological education,[93] and like many of the Non-Conformists readily assumed that the Bible had a self-evident message. However, once translated into the African vernacular the Bible has shown a quite remarkable capacity to find its own voice, even when translated by missionaries such as Moffat who had very deliberate ideological agendas and imprecise mastery of the language they were translating into. Not only does the Bible not have just one message, as modern biblical scholars know only too well, the very act of translating it in the colonial encounter produced 'a hybrid creation born of the colonial encounter itself'.[94] Indeed, because, argues the West African Lamin Sanneh, 'language is the intimate, articulate expression of culture', the missionary adoption of the vernacular 'was tantamount to adopting indigenous cultural criteria for the message, a piece of radical indigenization far greater than the standard portrayal of mission as Western cultural imperialism'.[95] Translation of the Bible into African vernaculars was 'a fundamental concession to the vernacular, and an inevitable weakening of the forces of uniformity and centralization'. 'Furthermore', says Sanneh, translation introduces 'a dynamic and pluralist factor into questions of the essence of the religion'. Thus, he continues,

> if we ask the question about the essence of Christianity, whatever the final answer, we would be forced to reckon with what the fresh medium reveals to us in feedback. It may thus happen that our own earlier understanding of the message will be challenged and even overturned by the force of the new experience. Translation would consequently help to bring us to new ways of viewing the world, commencing a process of revitalization that reaches into both the personal and cultural spheres.[96]

The translation of the Bible – in both a narrow technical sense and in a more profound theological sense – provided the potential for the revitalisation of both the biblical message and receptor culture. In the words of the Ghanaian scholar Kwame Bediako, translation enabled the Bible to become

[93] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness*, pp. 82–3; de Gruchy, 'The Alleged Political Conservatism of Robert Moffat', p. 22.
[94] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness*, p. 218.
[95] Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, p. 3.
[96] Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, p. 53.

'an independent yardstick by which to test, and sometimes to reject, what Western missionaries taught and practised' and in so doing 'provided the basis for developing new, indigenous forms of Christianity'.[97] Given that most of the early translation work took place in African contexts in which Africans were in substantial control, and given that missionaries were entirely dependent on African agency in the translation process, though the African presence was not usually acknowledged in the official missionary record,[98] a process which called on Africans to continually return to their cultural resources, even though the missionaries often denigrated their cultures, the translation of the Bible enabled the control of the Bible to change hands.

African ownership of the Bible

The founder of the large and still thriving African Independent Church Ibandla lamaNazaretha, the Church of the Nazarites, Isaiah Shembe, recounts in a sermon he preached in 1933 how the Bible was stolen from the missionaries. Petros M. Dhlomo, the great collector and historian of Isaiah Shembe's life and ministry,[99] tells the story of Shembe's sermon in the home of Ndlovu, 'the headman of Zibula at Lenge, in the year 1933',[100] in which Shembe tells the story or 'the parable of the liberating Bible': 'In olden times there were two might[y] nations who were fighting over a certain issue. In their war the one conquered the other one and took all their cattle away. They took even their children captive and put them into the school of the victorious nation.'[101] The story continues with a focus on three of these children, 'three sons of the same mother'. Among the tasks given to these children was that they 'had to sweep the houses of their teachers and the house of the Pope'.[102]

Shembe goes on to tell that 'All these children made good progress in school and passed their examinations well. Then they were trained as bishops.' However, Shembe goes on immediately to recount how there was a certain book that was locked away from them. The implication is clear. Children of the conquered nation had limited access to the texts of the victorious nation, thereby allowing them to rise to a level no higher than that of bishops. The Pope alone had access to one special text. This was the Bible: 'In the house of

[97] Bediako, 'Epilogue', p. 246.
[98] Mojola, 'Swahili Bible'; Mojola, '100 Years of the Luganda Bible'.
[99] Papini, 'Introduction', pp. xiii–xiv.
[100] Hexham and Oosthuizen (eds.), *The Story of Isaiah Shembe*, p. 224.
[101] Hexham and Oosthuizen (eds.), *The Story of Isaiah Shembe*, pp. 224–5.
[102] Hexham and Oosthuizen (eds.), *The Story of Isaiah Shembe*, p. 225.

the Pope there was a Bible which was kept under lock by him and only read by himself.'[103] However, Shembe goes on to relate,

> On a certain day he [the Pope] had to go for a few weeks to another place and he forgot to lock the Bible up at home. When the boys were sweeping his home they found the Bible unlocked. When they began to read it they discovered that their nation which had been demolished so badly by the war could never be restored unless they would get a book like this one and they considered what to do.
>
> When they came back from school they bought a copybook and copied the whole Bible. When they had finished their work, they returned the Bible to its place. Thereafter the Pope came back and saw that he forgot to lock his Bible in. He called the boys who worked in his house and asked them whether they had opened this book. They denied it and said that they did not see that it had not been locked up. Then he forgot about it. The boys considered how they could bring this book to their parents at home.
>
> At another day, they went and asked permission to visit their parents at home. They were permitted to go and they were given a time by which they must be back. When they came home, they did not stay there, rather they went from home to home and preached about this book until their time of leave was over and policemen were sent to look for these boys. Then they left this book there and returned to school.[104]

Shembe's sermon moves in another direction at this point, but eloquently captures a valued, copied and appropriated Bible, which in the remainder of the story comes to be the benchmark for all that is written in the Shembe tradition.[105]

'The Bible has a special place in the hearts and homes of African Christians', writes Mercy Amba Oduyoye from Ghana, who then proceeds to tell the following story:

> I was completely puzzled when I arrived at a sister's house and saw an open Bible in the cot of her newborn babe. 'You have left your Bible here', I called. 'No, it is deliberate; it will keep away evil influences.' I was dumbfounded: the daughter of a Methodist pastor, with a doctorate in a discipline of the natural sciences, earned in a reputable U.S. university, using the Bible as a talisman! When I told this story in the course of a social occasion in Nigeria, a discussion ensued that revealed many more such uses of the Bible: Christian lawyers

[103] Hexham and Oosthuizen (eds.), *The Story of Isaiah Shembe*, p. 225. There is no evidence that Shembe had a particular problem with the Roman Catholic Church, though they are the custodians of the Bible in this parable.
[104] Hexham and Oosthuizen (eds.), *The Story of Isaiah Shembe*, p. 225.
[105] Hexham and Oosthuizen (eds.), *The Story of Isaiah Shembe*, pp. 225–8.

> who keep a Bible on every shelf of their library; houses built with Bibles buried in their foundations and individuals buried with Bibles in their coffins; Bibles in cars that may never be read but whose presence proves comforting, a sort of Immanuel, or God-with-us.[106]

African resources for reading the Bible

Psalms in particular are well known, well loved, and well used in West Africa,[107] particularly in the large African Independent Churches, but also in 'mainline' missionary churches. Psalms are categorised according to local cultural concepts into protective, therapeutic and success Psalms.[108] The Yoruba, for example, inhabited a world full of potential menace, where every material threat, such as debt or sickness, had a spiritual origin, either in one's own personal enemy (*ota*) or in an array of other local indigenous deities (*orisa*).[109] Indeed, 'the primary concern of their day-to-day prayers [and their use of the Psalms in their prayers] was to enlist the power of God for the same kind of help and protection which the *orisa* provided for their devotees'.[110] The Bible became central to this daily concern for protection, healing and success, becoming the prime source of imprecatory potent words (*ogede*), used on their own, or recited over amulets containing various natural ingredients and/or the actual written words of a Psalm.[111] The Psalms closely resembled the traditional resources they had been instructed to abandon by the missionaries, and because the Bible was considered an iconic and aural object of power, it was readily appropriated and prescribed by African Christian practitioners. For example, Chief Ogunfuye prescribes Psalm 7 for protection against enemies and the evil one, either together with a special prayer recited every day or by writing the Psalm on a pure parchment and putting the amulet in a special consecrated bag kept under one's pillow. The prayer to accompany the Psalm is as follows:

> O merciful Father, Almighty and everlasting King, I beseech Thee in the holy name of Eel Elijon to deliver me from all secret enemies and evil spirits that plan my destruction always. Protect me from their onslaught and let their evil forces be turned back upon them. Let their expectation come to naught and let them fail in their bid to injure me. Let their ways be dark and slippery and

[106] Oduyoye, 'African Women's Reading of the Bible', p. 34.
[107] Oduyoye, 'African Women's Reading of the Bible', pp. 34–5.
[108] Adamo, 'The Use of Psalms', p. 337.
[109] Adamo, 'The Use of Psalms', p. 337; Peel, *The Making of the Yoruba*, p. 259.
[110] Peel, *The Making of the Yoruba*, p. 259.
[111] Adamo, 'The Use of Psalms', pp. 338–9.

> let Thy holy angels disperse them so that they may not come nigh unto my dwelling place. Hear my prayer now for the sake of holy Eel Elijon. Amen.[112]

Similarly, Chief Ogunfuye prescribes Psalm 6 to relieve a sick person of pain and worries, once again using a special prescribed prayer,[113] and Psalm 133 for success in the family.[114] Other practitioners use a range of other ingredients, including 'the use of herbs and parts of living and non-living things in conjunction with the reading of specific Psalms, together with the burning of candles, prayers, and recitation of the names of God a certain number of times'.[115]

Much of the old spirit world was and is a continuing reality for African Christians. While most missionaries denigrated and even demonised African religion and culture, when sub-Saharan Africans began to read the Bible for themselves they found in its pages, particularly in the Old Testament, many religio-cultural practices the missionaries had condemned, including polygamy, ancestors and local deities.[116] But it was not only the content of the Bible that enabled Africans to appropriate it as an African book, it was also their interpretative methods, for Africans did not come to the Bible empty-handed.

Whether performing song or story, a common feature of sub-Saharan Africans' cultural interpretation is a cyclical construction, found for example in a diverse range of African oral forms: in the songs and stories of the /Xam 'Bushmen', in the formal public praise poems (*izibongo*) of the Zulu praise poets (*izimbongi*), in the hymns of the Church of the Nazarites, in Black Consciousness and political resistance poetry[117] and in southern African jazz. Fundamental to indigenous African music, for example, is 'a cyclic harmonic pattern'. This rhythmic repetition of harmonic patterns, provided traditionally by a drum or, in an urban situation, a player shaking a tin filled with small stones, formed the 'root progression' on top of which melodies (and sometimes lyrics) were superimposed. These melodies too followed a cyclical form, with 'cyclical repetitions of one melody or melodic fragment yielding eventually, perhaps, to a similar treatment of another melody or fragment, and perhaps then still others, each melody possibly from a different source'.[118] What Africans brought to the interpretative process was a communal cyclical

[112] Adamo, 'The Use of Psalms', pp. 340–1.
[113] Adamo, 'The Use of Psalms', p. 342.
[114] Adamo, 'The Use of Psalms', p. 344.
[115] Adamo, 'The Use of Psalms', p. 346.
[116] Mafico, 'The Biblical God'.
[117] Brown, *Voicing the Text*.
[118] Ballantine, *Marabi Nights*, pp. 26–7.

interpretative process, founded on a rhythmic form (whether of drumming, dancing, singing, or praying). The emerging 'text' is constructed on cycles of repetition to which participants may contribute by making 'cuts' back to a prior series through an explicit repetition of elements which have gone before.[119] These indigenous and neo-indigenous traces of a cyclical construction appear 'to be bound up with African ontology which (in contrast to the linear, progressive, and teleological colonial-Christian model) emphasises the circularity of religious, social and historical life'.[120]

We find just such a communal and cyclical process of interpretation of the Bible in almost every sub-Saharan African church, whether African initiated or settler initiated. Musa Dube from Botswana characterises this form of interpretation, what she calls a *Semoya* (of the Spirit) reading, as a communal and participatory mode of interpretation through the use of songs, dramatised narration and repetition. The text, decided on for the occasion by an individual, once read, becomes the property of the group. All – both young and old, women and men, clergy and laity – 'are free to stand up and expound on the text in their own understanding'. While they are doing this, listeners may 'contribute to the interpretation by occasionally interrupting with a song that expounds on the theme of the passage', or the 'interpreter herself/himself can pause and begin a song that expresses the meaning of the passage'. In every case, whether the performance is dramatic or pedantic, the nuances of interpretation are 'to be read in the interjected songs and the repeated phrases'.[121] Particular songs, interjected in particular places, and particular repetitions constitute and contribute to the communal interpretation, collaborating and contending for meaning for hours around the cyclical axis of preaching.

All-night vigil or revival preaching/biblical interpretation is an example of a 'purposive act of reconstruction' in which African peoples have 'created a middle ground between a displaced "traditional" order and a modern world whose vitality was both elusive and estranging', by 'the repositioning of signs in sequences of practice', a *bricolage*, that promises 'to subvert the divisive structures of colonial society, returning to the displaced a tangible identity and the power to impose coherence upon a disarticulated world'.[122]

The oral/aural tradition of sub-Saharan Africa has also facilitated African Christians 'to hear' the Bible in a particular way. An excellent example of this is the teaching and preaching of Isaiah Shembe. Though it is not clear whether

[119] Brown, *Voicing the Text*, pp. 107–8.
[120] Brown, *Voicing the Text*, p. 107.
[121] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, p. 190.
[122] Comaroff, *Body of Power*, pp. 253–4.

or to what extent Shembe could read,[123] he always had someone reading the particular passages from the Bible he indicated as he preached. What Shembe heard from a particular passage was both its rhetoric and its content, with the former taking precedence in his instruction. Because Shembe was constructing a community amidst 'the radical dislocation of the early twentieth-century city', attempting to 'to recreate the social group and to resituate its mental and material spaces',[124] he was drawn to those biblical narratives, characters and 'voices' who stood before him in the biblical tradition as the ancestors of the community he was struggling to build. This is particularly clear in the didactic portions of Shembe's teachings, faithfully recorded by literate members of his church in their family notebooks,[125] where we encounter 'the speech of authority, of a leader and law-maker'.[126] It is the voice of a leader who stands (rhetorically) in the tradition of Moses and Paul (and even Jesus). In his teachings Shembe adopts the rhetoric of Moses the law-giver addressing the people of 'Israel' (in the Pentateuch) and Paul the apostle addressing his churches (in the epistles). He even situates himself as Jesus speaking to his disciples, delivering his very own Sermon on the Mount.[127] Among the most frequently cited Old Testament texts is Deuteronomy and the most frequently cited New Testament texts are the epistles, with the Pauline (including the Deutero-Pauline Pastoral epistles) being by far the most frequent. Clearly the direct form of address that these texts adopt, often incorporating a first-person subject, lent themselves to Shembe as he instructed his followers and constructed his church.

Sub-Saharan Africans have also brought other local resources to their biblical appropriation and interpretation. African art, for example, forged in the interface, like so much of African neo-indigenous hermeneutics,[128] of European and African influences, has often taken the Bible as its subject of interpretation. The woodcuts of Azaria Mbatha (b. 1941), from South Africa,[129] and John Muafangejo (1943–87), from Namibia,[130] regularly engage with the Bible. Mbatha in particular developed a particular narrative art style in order to interpret biblical narratives. His woodcut of the Joseph story (Figure 20.1) is an excellent example, grasping as it does the left-to-right and top-to-bottom

[123] West, 'Reading Shembe'.
[124] Gunner, *The Man of Heaven*, p. 23.
[125] Gunner, *The Man of Heaven*, p. 41.
[126] Gunner, *The Man of Heaven*, p. 35.
[127] Gunner, *The Man of Heaven*, p. 99.
[128] West, 'Indigenous Exegesis'.
[129] Mbatha, *Im Herzen des Tigers*.
[130] Levinson (ed.), *I was Lonelyness*.



Figure 20.1 Azaria Mbatha's interpretation of the Joseph story (woodcut).

format of European writing, but using African forms and themes instead of script. In adopting but adapting 'universal' European signs (both the Bible and writing), Mbatha is making the Bible speak to particular local realities, thereby shaping 'the inchoateness, the murky ambiguity of colonial encounters into techniques of empowerment and signs of collective representation'.[131]

Mbatha locates the story in Africa, which is where most of the Joseph story as told in Genesis takes place, and he reads the story from and for his African context. The characters, themes and concerns are African, with the symbols and ideas coming specifically from the Zulu tradition and culture.[132] Central to each of the nine panels, excepting the final panel, is an act of struggle and pain, a breaking of *ubuntu* (community). But by choosing to end his interpretation with the family reunion in Genesis 46, with the restoration of *ubuntu* in the ninth panel, instead of going on into the more ambiguous ending of the biblical story in chapters 47–50, Mbatha holds out a prophetic word of hope to his people who have been dislocated and damaged by apartheid.

The linocut which follows (Figure 20.2) is less hopeful, though there does remain a word of hope: 'IT GIVES SUFFICEINT [*sic*] TIME FOR REPENTANCE'. The enemy is now no longer apartheid, but HIV and AIDS, and so South African artist Trevor Makhoba (b. 1956) is dealing with a different beast. Though Makhoba comes from the same part of South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal, he comes from a different era, an era in which KwaZulu-Natal is the epicentre of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Torn between a message of retribution and hope – 'IT GIVES SUFFICEINT [*sic*] TIME FOR REPENTANCE' and 'GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE' – Makhoba draws on images from the book of Job (amongst other biblical texts, including perhaps 1 Peter 4:1–3 and/or 2 Corinthians 12:9).[133]

At first glance the work presents the prevailing theological position on HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, which is that this disease is a punishment from God. What we know of Makhoba's Christian and cultural commitments would predispose him to some form of theology of retribution,[134] and this particular work seems to support this view. The mouth of some great beast is waiting (or perhaps advancing) to devour those who do not repent with its twin gaping jaws: HIV (the upper jaw) and AIDS (the lower jaw). Tombstone- and coffin-like teeth are poised to crush. Yet Makhoba's theology provides

[131] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Modernity and its Malcontents*, p. xxii.
[132] Mbatha, *Im Herzen des Tigers*, p. 6.
[133] West, '(Ac)claiming the (Extra)ordinary African "Reader" of the Bible', pp. 42–6.
[134] Leeb-du Toit, 'Black Artists from KwaZulu-Natal'; Leigh, 'Aspects of Identity in KwaZulu-Natal Art'.

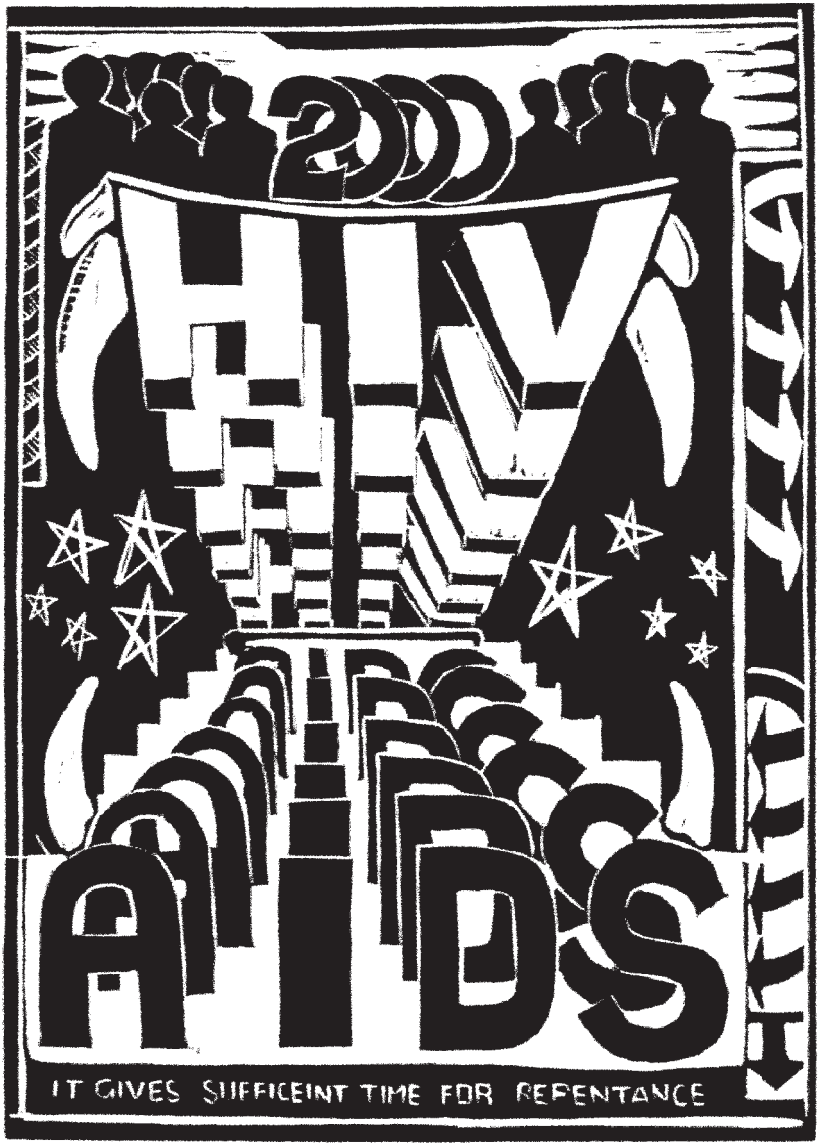


Figure 20.2 Trevor Makhoba's interpretation of HIV and AIDS (linocut).

some hope: there is time, he proclaims, for repentance. The jaws have not yet closed, they remain open. 'IT GIVES SUFFICEINT TIME'. The 'IT' he refers to is unclear, but it is probably this beast, whose millennial nostrils provide an

overt date. The darkness, he seems to be saying, of the new millennium and its heraldic disease are almost upon us, but there is still time to repent.

Sub-Saharan Africans have also turned to music as a form within which to appropriate and interpret the Bible. Inhabiting the same world as Trevor Makhoba and drawing on the same neo-indigenous resources as Isaiah Shembe, the South African poet and musician Mzwakhe Mbuli (b. *c.* 1958) takes up the rhetoric of Job in the song 'Song of the Spirit':

> Friday Mavuso, special tribute to the late President of the DPSA – the Disabled People of South Africa – died June 1995, car accident.
>
> When he died I wished I could stage a sit-in in heaven./ Magundulela ngubani oyohaya inkondlo ngawe?/ Yini eyakungenza ngikuhloniphe ukufa na?/ Lord my God I do not understand./ Pardon me, I am ignorant./ Here I stand in search of thy wisdom./ Is death an idiom, or is death an idiot?/ Lord my God, I do not understand.
>
> When are you on duty, and when are you on leave?/ Is there a holiday in heaven or not?/ Few years ago tragedy deprived us of two great talents./ In one week you took away Arthur – 'Fighting Prince' – Mayisela and Paul Ndlovu the singer./ Again, death deprived us of two great talents, legends, Friday Mavuso and Harry Gwala, both paralysed.
>
> Lord my God, I do not understand./ Punish me not, for I am ignorant./ Is there a new commandment?/ 'Thou shall suffer perpetually'/ 'Thou shall die more than other races'?/ Now I understand why other nations weep when the child is born.
>
> Lord my God, do you care about the poor?/ Why then remove the shepherd from the sheep?/ Is there a hidden prophecy about the plight of the black people?/ Is there a curse bestowed upon us?/ Senzeni thina sizwe esimnyama?/ Was the bullet that riddled Friday's spinal cord not enough?/ Why did you remove Friday Mavuso and leave Barend Strydom alone?/ I repeat, why did you remove Friday Mavuso and leave Barend Strydom alone?
>
> Lord my God, I cannot fax nor telephone you, but to continue with my provocative poetry .../ Why are there so many more funerals than weddings?/ Do you know that our graves are overcrowded?/ Is death an idiom, or death an idiot?
>
> Lord my God, why allow people with unfinished projects to enter your kingdom?/ When Friday Mavuso finally enters thy kingdom, honour him with a noble crown./ When he enters thy kingdom, ask him who should look after his sheep./ When he enters thy kingdom, ask him what should we do with his wheelchair./ When he enters thy kingdom, tell him I say his departure was too early and too soon for heaven, too soon for burial.[135]

[135] Mbuli, 'Song of the Spirit'.

The immediate context of this song concerns the untimely deaths of many black activists, and the amnesty granted to Barend Strydom, a white racist murderer, by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The wider context, as other tracks on the album indicate, is the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The lines that ask, 'Why are there so many more funerals than weddings?/ Do you know that our graves are overcrowded?' is a direct allusion to this reality of African lives. Sub-Saharan Africans attend funerals every weekend, but hardly ever a wedding. Economic issues and associated issues of unemployment, crime and violence also lurk in the background, as Mbuli laments specifically named untimely deaths, and untimely deaths in general. The rhetoric is the rhetoric of Job. There is a relentless, respectful–disrespectful, questioning of God. Mbuli's lament is resisting discourse, adopting as it does the cadence of the songs of the struggle against apartheid so familiar to millions of South Africans. Mbuli wonders whether struggle tactics such as sit-ins would work in heaven! He acknowledges his ignorance, but goes on to ask whether an eleventh commandment has been added to the list he knows so well. He worries that God is racist, punishing blacks disproportionately. Like Job, he longs for more immediate contact with God. And he ends by giving God instructions about how to behave in God's own context, heaven. Surely, Mbuli seems to be saying, if God cannot intervene more justly in our context, God must be able to act justly in God's context!

A post-colonial Bible

> When the white man came to our country he had the Bible and we (Blacks) had the land. The white man said to us 'Let us pray.' After the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible.

This anecdote is told all over sub-Saharan Africa, and captures succinctly the role of the Bible in the establishment of colonial control. So while the early encounters with the Bible in sub-Saharan Africa took place when Africans were substantially in control, African appropriation and ownership of the Bible took place under various forms of colonial control. Recognising this reality, but casting it in a positive and political light, Desmond Tutu has on occasion followed his retelling of this anecdote by saying, 'And we got the better deal!'[136] Tutu, speaking in the context of South Africa, where the Bible was one of the building blocks of apartheid, clearly lays a counter-claim to

[136] I have been unable to find a published source for this, but I have heard him make the comment on two public occasions.

the Bible as an African book, and a book that is essentially about liberation and wholeness and therefore on the side of Africans in their struggles.

This is nowhere more clear than in the post-liberation struggles in Tanzania. Following *uhuru* (national independence) in 1961, the first president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, initiated a village-based national project known as Ujamaa. In the immediate wake of political liberation, Ujamaa was a socio-political project aimed at economic and cultural liberation.[137] Writing in 1962 Nyerere says about Ujamaa, 'Our first step must be to re-educate ourselves; to regain our former attitude of mind. In our traditional African society we were individuals within a community. We took care of the community, and the community took care of us. We neither needed nor wished to exploit our fellow men.'[138] Even though, as a political leader in a religiously pluralistic country, Nyerere (like Nelson Mandela after him) was careful not to adopt a specifically Christian identity, he drew substantially on the Bible and the work of Christian liberation theologians.[139] Besides the Bible, his two other primary sources for Ujamaa were African culture and Marxism (and so there are many similarities between Ujamaa theology and South African Black theology).

Ujamaa, a Swahili word with a root meaning of 'family' or 'community', was invoked by Nyerere as a critique of capitalism, individualism and neo-colonialism, and explicitly drew on values rooted in the pre-colonial culture, aspects of a contextually appropriated Marxism, and elements of prophetic Christianity. Within Nyerere's own theological reflections and those of more formally trained theologians on *ujamaa* there are three related biblically derived concepts: God as community, humanity as community and church as community.[140] With respect to the first and foundational concept, for example, Ujamaa theologians took their starting point within the pre-colonial holistic worldview, over against Western dualism, emphasising the concept of 'participation', whereby each human being is a part of the whole and therefore has the right to participate in political and economic life on an equal footing.[141] Theologically, because this participation by all is a participation in both the material and the sacred, the search for God is also the search for one's own and the community's welfare.[142] The theological concept used by Ujamaa theologians to consolidate this understanding of God as community was the trinity,

[137] Frostin, *Liberation Theology*, p. 30.
[138] Frostin, *Liberation Theology*, p. 30; Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity*, p. 166.
[139] Frostin, *Liberation Theology*, p. 49; Magomba, 'Gogo People of Tanzania', pp. 135–6.
[140] Frostin, *Liberation Theology*, p. 48.
[141] Frostin, *Liberation Theology*, pp. 49–52.
[142] Frostin, *Liberation Theology*, pp. 52–4.

since the interrelation between the three persons in the trinity is a sharing of the entire being. Therefore, life in community is a vocation for all creatures.[143]

Though not in a systematic manner, Nyerere turned again and again to the Bible to affirm and encourage commitment to the Ujamaa project. Indeed, he even produced his own Swahili translation of the Gospels and Acts,[144] drawing on both in his public speeches. On 29 February 1968, just a year after he had launched the Ujamaa project, Nyerere challenged students and staff at the University of Liberia about participation in the African community-building process, saying:

> You know better than I do that two thousand years ago, Jesus said: 'For unto whoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they shall ask the more.' What is it, then, that we require of those in our societies who have education? We require service to the community – and service in geometric progression according to the amount they have received.[145]

He saw the struggle against poverty, ignorance and disease as a struggle for 'abundant life', alluding to John 10:10, and made it clear in a speech to the Maryknoll Sisters in New York in 1970 that 'ours is a living faith, if you like, a revolutionary faith, for faith without action is sterile, and action without faith is meaningless'.[146]

While Nyerere sought to transform African society with a political project to which the Bible made a contribution, the Kenyan novelist Ngugi Wa Thiong'o sought to transform African society through his novels, and here too the Bible made a substantive contribution, even though Ngugi was fully aware of 'how deeply this book is in the propagation of ideologies which naturalise the hierarchical oppositions of slave and master, native and coloniser, pagan and Christian, savage and European, Black and white, etc. upon which colonial and imperial rule were predicated'.[147] And while Nyerere and Ngugi used the theological content and shape of the Bible in their projects of transformation, the priests of the Mwali (the indigenous name for the indigenous Supreme Being) rain-making shrines in Zimbabwe invoked 'the voice' of the God of the Bible, for the One who spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai was the same as the One who spoke from the indigenous cult-shrines in the Matopo

[143] Frostin, *Liberation Theology*, p. 55.
[144] Magomba, 'Gogo People of Tanzania', p. 136.
[145] Magomba, 'Gogo People of Tanzania', p. 136.
[146] Magomba, 'Gogo People of Tanzania', p. 137.
[147] Mwikisa, 'The Limits of Difference', p. 164.

hills.[148] And while the priests of the Mwali rain-shrines believed that 'God's methodology has not changed with times, but what has changed is the venue, the location and audience',[149] African Christian diviners among the Yoruba in Nigeria dispense amulets for protection made up of parchment inscribed with biblical quotations.[150]

That the Bible is sacred and significant in sub-Saharan Africa there is no doubt – whether as a resource for an Africa leader in guiding a nation on its post-liberation path or for an individual African searching for success in his or her daily life. For while early African engagement with the Bible was in terms of their own religio-cultural heritages and trajectories, the engagement was mutual, with the Bible also exerting its own 'trans-historical memory' and its own stories.[151] So even when colonialism exerted its destructive grasp on African societies, the Bible became a resource for resistance, notwithstanding its 'external' (i.e. complicity with colonialism) and 'internal' (i.e. inherently oppressive passages) ambiguities.

Even those Africans who have regretted the way in which the Bible has become a significant resource for sub-Saharan Africans, given its close association with colonialism, have had to acknowledge its widespread role as a sustaining resource. The South African theologian Takatso Mofokeng records how in the struggle against apartheid young black South Africans 'have categorically identified the Bible as an oppressive document by its very nature and to its very core' and have suggested that the best option 'is to disavow the Christian faith and consequently be rid of the obnoxious Bible'. Indeed, he continues, some 'have zealously campaigned for its expulsion from the oppressed Black community', but, he notes, with little success.[152] The reason that campaigns to get rid of the Bible have not succeeded, Mofokeng argues, is 'largely due to the fact that no easily accessible ideological silo or storeroom is being offered to the social classes of our people that are desperately in need of liberation'. African Traditional Religions as a resource, continues Mofokeng, are 'too far behind most blacks', while Marxism, regrettably, 'is to my mind, far ahead of many blacks, especially adult people'. So, 'in the absence of a better storeroom of ideological and spiritual food, the Christian religion and the Bible will continue for an undeterminable period of time to

[148] Mafu, 'Rain-Making Institutions', pp. 410–12.
[149] Mafu, 'Rain-Making Institutions', p. 412.
[150] Adamo, 'The Use of Psalms', p. 340.
[151] Peel, *The Making of the Yoruba*, p. 9.
[152] Mofokeng, 'Black Christians', p. 40.

be the haven of the Black masses par excellence'.[153] What resonates with the black masses, says Mofokeng, is 'the nature of the Bible as a book of hope for the downtrodden'.[154]

Given this situation of very limited ideological options, and the fact of the Bible's significance among ordinary Africans, Mofokeng is forced to accept that 'Black theologians who are committed to the struggle for liberation and are organically connected to the struggling Christian people, have chosen to honestly do their best to shape the Bible into a formidable weapon in the hands of the oppressed instead of leaving it to confuse, frustrate or even destroy our people'.[155]

African biblical scholarship

Sub-Saharan African biblical scholarship shares the neo-indigenous heritage of ordinary African interpreters of the Bible, but added to this hermeneutic strand is another, for African biblical scholars have been inducted into the discipline of academic biblical scholarship, usually in Western contexts or by Western practitioners. African biblical scholarship is also a relatively recent development in African biblical reception and interpretation. Though the earliest piece of biblical scholarship in sub-Saharan Africa was probably the work of Pierre Simond, the minister of the French church at the Cape, who in June 1699 began a new translation of the Psalms into the French language,[156] African biblical scholarship done by Africans dates from the 1930s.

The Nigerian biblical scholar Justin Ukpong charts the historical and hermeneutical dimensions of African biblical scholarship as follows. The first phase extends from the 1930s up into the 1970s, and was characterised by a reaction to missionary and colonial denigration of African religion and culture, and so adopted an apologetic stance which focused on legitimating African religion and culture from a comparative analysis of particular biblical texts. This initial phase led to a second phase which was both reactive and proactive, with a less defensive and less anti-missionary/colonial attitude, focusing more on how the African context was a resource for biblical interpretation, in terms of both African religio-cultural and socio-political concerns. The third phase, covering the 1990s, was almost entirely proactive, making the African context the subject of biblical interpretation and taking the contributions of ordinary

[153] Mofokeng, 'Black Christians', p. 40.
[154] Mofokeng, 'Black Christians', p. 38.
[155] Mofokeng, 'Black Christians', p. 40.
[156] Denis, 'Psalms at the Cape', p. 205.

African interpreters seriously. The concern for both the religio-cultural and socio-political dimensions of African life continued to be a feature of this phase.[157]

A characteristic of each of these phases, according to Ukpong, is a socio-historical comparative and evaluative engagement between the African context and the biblical text. The dialogue between the socio-historical world of the biblical text and the religious, cultural, economic and political world of African life is a two-way process. The comparative approach is not simply a reactive strategy for validating anything and everything in the African socio-historical world that shows some similarities with the socio-historical world of and behind the biblical text; there is always an element of evaluation, sometimes from text to context and sometimes from context to text. Ukpong neatly captures many of the methodological impulses of African biblical interpretation. First, African biblical interpretation is predominantly interested in the historical and sociological dimensions of the biblical text. Second, African contextual concerns are consciously and explicitly a part of the interpretative process. Third, African biblical interpretation is always aware of the interpretative legacy and capacity of its African heritage. Fourth, African biblical scholarship actively transacts with the ambiguous history of the Bible's arrival in Africa, and so is constantly attempting to assert itself over against the dominant discourses of Western imperialism and colonialism, while at the same time appropriating the Bible as an African sacred text.

However, while most characterisations of African biblical hermeneutics tend to portray a bi-polar approach, referring for example to 'the comparative method',[158] in which African context and biblical text interpret each other, it would be more accurate to describe African biblical hermeneutics as tri-polar. Implicit in bipolar-like formulations are aspects of a third pole mediating between the poles of the African context and the biblical text: appropriation. Knut Holter, for example, refers to the ways in which biblical text and African context 'illuminate one another', and Justin Ukpong, a key commentator on the comparative method, refers overtly to the goal of comparative interpretation as 'the actualization of the theological meaning of the text in today's context so as to forge integration between faith and life, and engender commitment to personal and societal transformation'.[159] What connects text and context, then, is a form of dialogical appropriation that has a theological and

[157] Ukpong, 'Biblical Interpretation in Africa', p. 12.
[158] Anum, 'Comparative Readings', p. 468; Ukpong, 'Biblical Interpretation in Africa', p. 12; Holter, *Old Testament Research for Africa*, pp. 88–9.
[159] Ukpong, 'Biblical Interpretation in Africa', p. 24.

a praxiological dimension. This ideo-theological third pole can take various forms, resulting in at least four different emphases in African biblical interpretation: inculturation, liberation, feminist and post-colonial hermeneutics.

The third pole offers an important starting point in understanding the different emphases in African biblical hermeneutics. The other two poles, the biblical text and the African context, are no less important, but an examination of the third pole clarifies *how* these two fundamental poles are brought into dialogue. That there is engagement between biblical text and African context is fundamental to African biblical scholarship. While Western forms of biblical interpretation have been reluctant, until recently, to acknowledge that text and context are always, at least implicitly, in conversation, the dialogical dimension of biblical interpretation has always been an explicit feature of African biblical hermeneutics. This is readily apparent from even a cursory survey of the published work of African biblical scholarship.[160] Interpreting the biblical text is never, in African biblical hermeneutics, an end in itself. Biblical interpretation is always about changing the African context. This is what links ordinary African biblical interpretation and African biblical scholarship, a common commitment to 'read' the Bible for personal and societal transformation.

The kind of contextual change and transformation envisaged in particular African contexts shapes *how* biblical text and African context are brought into dialogue. The two most established forms of appropriation in African biblical scholarship have been inculturation and liberation hermeneutics. In the last decade, however, two other forms of appropriation have emerged: African feminist and post-colonial hermeneutics. Each of these forms of appropriation has its own particular 'ideo-theological' orientation.

The most common African form of ideo-theological orientation is inculturation hermeneutics. Like other forms of African biblical interpretation inculturation hermeneutics takes its cue from life outside the academy. The general experience of African Christians was that African social and cultural concerns were not reflected in missionary and Western academic forms of biblical interpretation. Inculturation hermeneutics arose as a response, 'paying attention to the African socio-cultural context and the questions that arise therefrom'.[161] Inculturation hermeneutics 'designates an approach to biblical interpretation which seeks to make the African . . . context the *subject* of interpretation'; which means that every dimension of the interpretative process is

[160] LeMarquand, 'A Bibliography of the Bible in Africa'.
[161] Ukpong, 'Rereading the Bible', p. 4.

'*consciously* informed by the world-view of, and the life experience within that culture'.[162] While Ukpong himself includes the historical, social, economic, political and religious as elements of inculturation hermeneutics,[163] the tendency of most African inculturation hermeneutics is to concentrate on the cultural and religious elements. These elements, then, make a substantial contribution to the ideo-theological orientation of inculturation hermeneutics.

Another element in the constitution of inculturation hermeneutics is the recognition that African biblical interpretation is always in some sense 'over-against' or in opposition to the forms of biblical interpretation imposed by and inherited from missionary Christianity and Western academic biblical studies. The missionary–colonial axis is always a factor in inculturation hermeneutics, contributing to its ideo-theological orientation.

Alongside this oppositional element is another element, somewhat in tension with it. As Ukpong says, 'the focus of [African] interpretation is on the theological meaning of the text within a contemporary context'. This formulation recognises that the Bible is a significant sacred text with a message for African socio-cultural contexts. As Ukpong goes on to say, 'This involves interactive engagement between the biblical text and a particular contemporary socio-cultural issue such that the gospel message serves as a critique of the culture, and/or the cultural perspective enlarges and enriches the understanding of the text.'[164] Here he captures succinctly the two-way engagement between text and context; what he also captures is the predominant attitude of trust towards the Bible within inculturation hermeneutics. Though the Bible has come to Africa as part of the missionary–colonial imperialistic package, the Bible itself has 'good news' for Africa, and/or Africa is able to illuminate the biblical message in a way that Western biblical scholarship has not been able to do. So an attitude of trust towards the Bible itself is a feature of inculturation hermeneutics, alongside its oppositional stance towards colonialism.

Almost all of the above elements are also constitutive of liberation hermeneutics, though the mix is somewhat different. Like inculturation hermeneutics, African liberation hermeneutics has its starting point with the experience of the masses. In the words of the South African biblical scholar Itumeleng Mosala, the hermeneutical starting point of liberation hermeneutics is the 'social and material life' of 'the black struggle for liberation'.[165]

[162] Ukpong, 'Rereading the Bible', p. 5.
[163] Ukpong, 'Rereading the Bible', p. 6.
[164] Ukpong, 'Rereading the Bible', p. 6.
[165] Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 67.

However, while African liberation hermeneutics acknowledges the importance of both the spiritual and the material,[166] like inculturation hermeneutics, the emphasis in liberation hermeneutics is on the economic and political dimensions of African life. Religion and culture are important but peripheral, and economic and political analysis is central. Race and class, not religion and culture, are the critical categories of liberation hermeneutics. And while inculturation hermeneutics is quite eclectic in the kinds of sociological conceptual frameworks it draws on, liberation hermeneutics is more specific, drawing heavily on Marxist conceptual frameworks.[167]

African liberation hermeneutics also clearly shares the oppositional stance of inculturation hermeneutics to the missionary–colonial project, though its categories of contestation are different, as indicated. However, liberation hermeneutics raises questions about the Bible itself, with a clarity not found in inculturation hermeneutics. The Bible is a resource for liberation, but it is also a source of oppression and domination, and not just in the way it has been used by the missionary–colonial project; the Bible is in part intrinsically oppressive.[168] The ideological ambiguity of the Bible is a significant feature of liberation hermeneutics, resulting in an intertwining of suspicion and trust in the ideo-theological orientation of liberation hermeneutics.

The ambiguous attitude to the Bible in liberation hermeneutics has also had methodological consequences for some. The predominant interpretative methodologies for engaging with both the African context and the biblical text in inculturation hermeneutics have been historical and sociological forms of analysis. With respect to the biblical text, historical-critical and an eclectic range of sociological methods are used. With respect to the African context, an eclectic range of religio-cultural forms of analysis within African theology and anthropology are used.[169] African liberation hermeneutics inherits but then rejects this eclectic assortment of socio-historical analytical resources,[170] arguing instead for a more structured and systemic analysis of both the biblical text (within its sites of production) and the African context, using historical–materialist categories of analysis. According to Mosala the biblical text and African context should not only be brought into dialogue in terms of content, they should also be brought into dialogue in terms of methodology. Both the

[166] Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 67.
[167] Frostin, *Liberation Theology*.
[168] Mofokeng, 'Black Christians', p. 34; Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 41.
[169] Ukpong, 'Rereading the Bible'; Ukpong, 'The Parable of the Shrewd Manager'.
[170] Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, pp. 43–66.

Bible and the black experience and struggle must be analysed structurally using historical–materialist categories; in other words, African interpreters must recognise that the biblical texts are rooted in the struggles of their material sites of production, just as the life of ordinary black South Africans is rooted in particular socio-historical modes of production.[171]

African feminist hermeneutics – and the designation 'feminist' is problematic, with some preferring to borrow the African American term 'womanist',[172] some adopting an African indigenous designation, such as *bosadi*,[173] and others using the general phrase 'African women's hermeneutics'[174] – emerges from within African inculturation and African liberation hermeneutics, and so shares features with both. African feminist hermeneutics has been in dialogue with both the religio-cultural emphasis of inculturation hermeneutics[175] and the racial–economic–political emphasis of liberation hermeneutics,[176] though the former is predominant. Because of the predominance of a religio-cultural emphasis in African feminist hermeneutics, it could be argued that much of this work is really a form of inculturation hermeneutics. However, African feminist hermeneutics usually shares the attitude of suspicion towards the biblical text of African liberation hermeneutics. Most importantly, while African feminist hermeneutics, like African liberation hermeneutics, insists on a related structured and systematic analysis of both the African context and the biblical text, its distinctive feature is that their focus is on gender and the systemic nature of patriarchy.[177]

A methodological innovation in some African feminist hermeneutics has been its use of literary exegetical modes of analysis of the biblical text. While the predominant exegetical modes of analysis of both African inculturation and liberation hermeneutics have been socio-historical, with only a few voices advocating and using literary modes of exegesis,[178] African feminist hermeneutics has been quite receptive to literary modes of interpretation.[179]

African biblical hermeneutics, whether tending towards inculturation or liberation or feminist trajectories in its ideo-theological orientation, has always

[171] Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, pp. 31–2.
[172] Nadar, 'The Character of Ruth'.
[173] Masenya, 'Proverbs 31:10–31'.
[174] Haddad, 'African Women's Theologies of Survival'.
[175] Mbuwayesango, 'Sarah and Hagar'.
[176] Mncube, 'Biblical Problems and the Struggle of Women'; Mosala, 'Biblical Hermeneutics and the Struggle of Women'; Plaatjie, 'Luke 2:36–38'.
[177] Okure, 'Feminist Interpretation'.
[178] Boesak, *Black and Reformed*; West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*.
[179] Nadar, 'The Character of Ruth'; Nadar, '"Texts of Terror"'.

been resolutely situated over against missionary–colonial imperialism.[180] So it is strange that African biblical scholarship has been slow to engage, explicitly,[181] with emergent forms of post-colonial hermeneutics.[182] However, as with all forms of academic African biblical hermeneutics, the wider world of biblical scholarship has offered African biblical scholarship potentially useful resources which it can refashion to fit to African contexts.

It is from within African feminist hermeneutics that the most sustained engagement with post-colonial hermeneutics has come.[183] As with the other forms of African biblical hermeneutics, post-colonial biblical hermeneutics has its starting point in the realities of ordinary Africans, for whom the Bible has become an African book, but an African book 'that will always be linked to and remembered for its role in facilitating European imperialism'.[184] The complicity of the Bible with European imperialism is explicit and central to the ideo-theological orientation of African post-colonial biblical hermeneutics. What the other forms of African biblical hermeneutics do not address in sufficient detail is the question 'why the biblical text, its readers, and its institutions are instruments of imperialism';[185] this is the first part of the task of post-colonial hermeneutics.

Together with African liberation and feminist hermeneutics, post-colonial hermeneutics is deeply suspicious of the Bible's own imperial charter.[186] In other words, the kinds of imperial attitudes and practices performed by missionaries and colonial forces is related to the imperial tendencies of the biblical texts themselves.[187] The next crucial question, therefore, is how post-colonial African subjects should read the texts which have been instrumental in the establishment of colonialism in their contexts.[188] So the second part of post-colonial hermeneutics is to read the Bible for decolonisation.

Reading for decolonisation must, Musa Dube argues, follow the logic of imperialism, understanding its grammar and then reading against it. This includes reading against the geography of biblical and Western imperial

[180] West, 'Shifting Perspectives'.
[181] Punt, 'Some Mind and Road Mapping'; Punt, 'Why Not Postcolonial Biblical Criticism?'; West, 'Finding a Place'; West, 'Ten Years of (South) African Ambivalence'.
[182] Moore and Segovia (eds.), *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism*.
[183] Dube, 'Toward a Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation'; Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*; Dube, 'Looking Back and Forward'; Nzimande, 'The *Gebirah* in the Hebrew Bible'; Nzimande, 'Reconfiguring Jezebel'.
[184] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, p. 3.
[185] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, p. 6.
[186] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, p. 10.
[187] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, p. 15.
[188] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, p. 16.

expansionism, reading against the racialising potential of the biblical text (expressed in ethnic terms) and the racial politics of Western imperial ideology, reading against the sanctioning of unequal power relations in biblical texts and colonial projects, reading against the universalising tendencies of both the Bible and Western imperialism, and reading against the suppression of the female presence in the Bible and imperial project.[189]

While the Bible can and must be read for decolonisation, it is not the only resource. Among the resources for reading for decolonisation are the very languages and literatures (including the oral) denigrated and supplanted by the Bible and Western imperialism.[190] However, African post-colonial hermeneutics recognises that the vast literature 'born from the encounter with imperialist forces' is itself 'partly shaped by the textual forms of their imperial counterparts'.[191] African resources, particularly those forged in resistance to imperialism, partake in a form of hybridity,[192] in which something new and vital is constructed from the encounter with colonialism.[193] One of the most significant contributions of African post-colonial hermeneutics is this recognition that African post-colonial interpretation (like African post-colonial identity) is itself partially constituted by colonialism.[194] Instead of denying this by claiming an authentically African interpretation, post-colonial interpretation embraces the multiplicity of identities and differences that constitute the post-colonial African context, but always with a view to harnessing these hybrid resources for decolonisation.

While all forms of African biblical hermeneutics, whether inculturation, liberation, feminist, or post-colonial, are committed to identifying and recovering African interpretative resources, they also engage critically with the pre-colonial African heritage. African post-colonial hermeneutics is no exception, recovering but also questioning, for example, the power of pre-colonial African queens.[195] In its present form, African post-colonial hermeneutics shares much in common with the ideo-theological orientations of liberation and feminist hermeneutics, but also shares elements of the ideo-theological orientation of inculturation hermeneutics.

Three other elements which cross-cut and contribute to the ideo-theological orientations of academic African biblical interpretation are the ecclesio-

[189] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, pp. 16–21.
[190] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, p. 49.
[191] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, pp. 50–1.
[192] Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, p. 122.
[193] Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations*, p. 126.
[194] Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, p. 249.
[195] Nzimande, 'Reconfiguring Jezebel'.

theological heritage of the missionaries, the role of ordinary non-academic African interpreters of the Bible and the specific contextual struggles and issues of African life.

In his detailed study of the role of religion in the making of the Yoruba people of West Africa, J. D. Y. Peel reminds us of the enduring contribution of the world religions (specifically Christianity and Islam) in any post-colonial context. These are 'great vehicles of trans-historical memory' which are 'ceaselessly re-activated in the consciousness of their adherents'.[196] Peel cautions that while we must of course ground African Christianity and Islam in *African* history, we must not neglect the specific ways in which they also belong to Christian or Muslim stories.[197] The Christian narrative, Peel reminds us, has its own power. However, while there are cases in which African post-colonial Christianity has had almost no influence from Western missionary Christianity, such as the case of Isaiah Shembe and the Church of the Nazarites, most African Christianities have strong and enduring missionary ecclesio-theological memories.[198] In other words, besides the Bible there are almost always residual, at least, missionary ecclesio-theological influences in all four forms of African biblical hermeneutics. Each of the many missionary movements which brought the Bible, Christianity and colonialism to Africa had its own ecclesio-theological emphasis. The grand narrative of missionary Christianity – 'the religious project which brought the missionaries in the first place'[199] – has an enduring impact in African biblical interpretation, the clearest cases being those of the Catholic and evangelical missionary ecclesio-theological legacies and the more recent impact of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianities.

Being rooted in African realities, African biblical hermeneutics is accountable to ordinary African interpreters of the Bible. This includes allowing ordinary African interpreters to partially constitute the kind of discipline African biblical scholarship is.[200] They do this in a variety of ways, including being (in part) the implied readers of African biblical scholarship, being those who constantly call on African biblical scholars to share their resources with them in order to address their contextual needs, being those who share their local and indigenous interpretive resources with biblical scholarship, and being those who participate with African biblical scholarship in the interpretation

[196] Peel, *The Making of the Yoruba*, p. 9.
[197] Peel, *The Making of the Yoruba*, p. 9.
[198] Sundkler and Steed, *A History*.
[199] Peel, *The Making of the Yoruba*, p. 4.
[200] Okure, 'Feminist Interpretation', p. 77.

of biblical texts.[201] The African biblical scholar is never allowed to settle in the academy; there is a constant call from ordinary African interpreters for African biblical scholars to engage with them and their realities.[202]

While a great diversity of African issues is brought to bear on African biblical hermeneutics, there are moments when particular issues dominate the landscape. The emergence of African feminist hermeneutics across the African continent in response to gender issues is one example. More recently the continental crisis of HIV and AIDS has summoned all four major forms of African biblical hermeneutics to respond.[203]

The Bible in Africa's 'new Christianity'

Many millions of ordinary African Christians have not needed the African academy to show them how the Bible might be 'a weapon' in the personal and political struggles of everyday life in Africa. In the three decades since Takatso Mofokeng did his analysis, the Bible has become the central resource of emerging forms of what Paul Gifford calls Africa's 'new Christianity'.[204] Of course, this African Christianity is not really 'new', drawing as it does on forms of African evangelicalism and aspects of African (traditional) religion. In terms of the former, these new forms of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity emphasise personal conversion and the centrality of the Bible,[205] and in terms of the latter, they live in a reality in which beings and objects are 'charged with varying degrees and qualities of supernatural power',[206] with which this new Christianity must contend. Emerging in the 1980s alongside the more familiar four forms of African Christianity, namely, Catholic, Protestant, established Pentecostal and African Independent (or Initiated),[207] these new forms of African Christianity forge new combinations from elements of the old. What makes these various forms 'new' is their predominant emphasis, which is economic success, wealth, and status in this world.[208] Economic prosperity has been 'the motor that has powered this entire explosion'.[209] Healing, the predominant emphasis of more established forms of Pentecostal and

[201] West, 'Indigenous Exegesis'.
[202] Ukpong, 'Popular Readings'.
[203] Dube and Maluleke, 'HIV/AIDS as the New Site of Struggle'; Dube and Kanyoro (eds.), *Grant me Justice!*
[204] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*.
[205] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, p. 23 n.7.
[206] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, p. 83.
[207] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, p. 20.
[208] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, pp. 44–70.
[209] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, p. 81.

Charismatic Christianity and African Independent Churches has been superseded in these new churches by economic success. And an other-worldly millennialism has been replaced by a this-worldly prosperity.[210]

The second emphasis, from which the first is fuelled, is the absolute centrality of the Bible.[211] Though not read in great portions or detail,[212] the Bible is *the* fundamental authoritative resource for life,[213] and speaks to the individual person about God's intervention in the here and now,[214] in a pragmatic form of Christianity in which the Bible has the answers to the existential problems of Africans, 'especially to their most pressing existential problem, economic survival'.[215]

The wider societal economic and political role of these 'new' churches remains the subject of debate. While all agree that the political realm is spiritualised, such that 'circumstances are simply not relevant in comparison with what the Word of God says must be the case'[216] and where the focus is on the blessed believer who is not afflicted by the national and continental 'curses of poverty',[217] so relativising the role of governments, there is less agreement on the effects that this individualised gospel has through its individuals on the wider society.[218]

Conclusion

Having divided the analysis of African biblical reception and interpretation into two historical and geographical sections, it remains, in conclusion, to acknowledge that the Sahara desert no longer divides 'Africa' in the way it used to. The Coptic Church is now represented on the southernmost tip of the continent, in Cape Town, where its biblical heritage is currently contributing to and engaging with various forms of South African biblical interpretation. And the debates within South Africa concerning the ambiguity of the Bible and the appropriate methodologies to use in its interpretation have found their way to Ethiopia.[219] Now it is not missionaries and colonial

[210] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, p. 81.
[211] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, pp. 71–82.
[212] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, pp. 28, 78.
[213] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, pp. 71–2.
[214] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, pp. 72–5.
[215] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, pp. ix, 76.
[216] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, p. 165.
[217] Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, p. 166.
[218] See the discussion of 'implicit politics' in Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, pp. 169–72.
[219] McEntire, 'Biblical Interpretation in Ethiopia'.

forces which carry the Bible across the continent but Africans themselves. So the mapping provided in this chapter must remain provisional. The territory that is the reception of the Bible in Africa is far from static, as new forms of African Christianity emerge from the old, each drawing substantially though differently on the Bible.

21

The Bible in North America

MARK NOLL

The history of the Bible in North America is unusually full and unusually complex. It involves persistent attention by learned elites as well as the unschooled, cultural hegemony as well as social protest, intensely personal meditation as well as broad public application, a huge publishing enterprise in English as well as printing in countless other languages. The story is almost as rich for Canada as for the United States. A good start at indicating the importance of the Bible in North American history, but also the complications of its presence, is provided by the notice given to Scripture in 1911 on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the King James Version (KJV).

At that time, nearly unanimous American opinion held that this one book had been *the* decisive volume for all of Western civilisation. Such sentiments were expressed from the summit of the political world. Within days of each other in the spring of 1911, the sitting governor of New Jersey and the former governor of New York both made substantial addresses on the significance of the KJV. Former president Theodore Roosevelt's speech was at the Pacific Theological Seminary in Berkeley, California, while soon-to-be president Woodrow Wilson's addressed a crowd of 12,000 in Denver while on a nationwide journey exploring the possibilities of a presidential run.

Roosevelt was characteristically dramatic: 'No other book of any kind ever written in English – perhaps no other book ever written in any other tongue – has ever so affected the whole life of a people as this authorized version of the Scriptures has affected the life of the English-speaking peoples.'[1] Wilson, although characteristically more academic, was just as definite: 'Not a little of the history of liberty lies in the circumstance that the moving sentences of this book were made familiar to the ears and the understanding of those peoples who have led mankind in exhibiting the forms of government and the

[1] Theodore Roosevelt, 'The Bible and the Life of the People', in *Realizable Ideals* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries, 1969 [1911]), p. 69.

impulses of reform which have made for freedom and for self-government among mankind.'[2] Roosevelt and Wilson could speak without nuance because they knew that the era's mainstream American opinion would agree. To them, Scripture, and especially the KJV, was a taproot of American democracy and a fountain of American ideals.

Yet by 1911 large swaths of American society would have begged to differ, not so much about the importance of Scripture but about the supposed virtues of this one translation and its effects on American civilisation. As an example, the second president of the United States, John Adams, once wrote to disabuse his son, John Quincy, of the notion that any one version of Scripture could count as a true 'Rule of Faith'. He began his argument by denouncing 'the translation by King James the first' as being carried out by someone who was 'more than half a Catholick', which in 1816 was anything but a compliment.[3]

John Adams's disparagement of James I points to a more serious reason why some Americans would have been delighted to see the KJV pass from the scene, with Catholics first in line. Throughout the nineteenth century significant civil strife was created by the mandated use of the KJV in public institutions, especially public schools. In Boston, the 'Eliot School Rebellion' of 1859 was sparked when an assistant to the principal at a public school used a rattan stick to beat the hands of a ten-year old Catholic student, Thomas Whall, for half an hour when Whall refused to recite the Ten Commandments from the KJV. Whall's priest and his parents did not object to reciting the Ten Commandments, but they did object to the mandatory use of the Protestants' KJV for the recitation.[4]

Other reformers, who also felt that the KJV had been used as a tool of repression, expressed similar opinions. As early as 1837 Sara Grimké was appealing for a translation to replace the KJV, which she felt had obscured the Bible's message of liberation for women. Grimké professed her entire willingness to live by the Bible, but she also believed that 'almost every thing that has been written on this subject, has been the result of a misconception of the simple truths revealed in the Scriptures, in consequence of the false translation of many passages of Holy Writ. . . . King James's translators certainly were not

[2] Woodrow Wilson, 'An Address in Denver on the Bible', in Arthur S. Link (ed.), *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 69 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966–94), vol. XXIII (1971), pp. 12–13.

[3] James H. Hutson (ed.), *The Founders on Religion: A Book of Quotations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 26.

[4] John McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom* (New York: Norton, 2003), pp. 7–14.

inspired. I therefore claim the original as my standard, *believing that to have been inspired*.'[5]

Causes for complaint among African Americans went even deeper, since liberal quotation from the KJV had strongly supported American slavery. Thus, it was no surprise when in 1899 Henry McNeal Turner, a bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, called for a new translation. His complaint was that 'the white man' had

> colored the Bible in his translation to suit the white man, and made it, in many respects, objectionable to the Negro. And until a company of learned black men shall rise up and retranslate the Bible, it will not be wholly acceptable and in keeping with the higher conceptions of the black man. . . . We need a new translation of the Bible for colored churches.[6]

The bitter relevance of Turner's appeal was underscored shortly thereafter, and from the highest reaches of the land. In 1916 President Wilson responded positively to an invitation to take part in a hundredth anniversary celebration for the American Bible Society (ABS) to be held at the Daughters of the American Revolution building in Washington, DC. Yet before the event could take place there was, in the words of a Bible Society official, 'one difficult corner to turn – the color question'. This official explained to the staunchly segregationist president that, as a national organisation, having 'an Agency among colored people with a colored minister at its head, we have certain obligations which we cannot avoid'.[7] Despite this sense of duty, on 7 May 1916 the president, as a result of unrecorded back-stage manoeuvring, addressed the Society with no blacks on the platform. On that occasion the same Wilson who in 1911 had praised the KJV with the words 'How these pages teem with the masses of mankind! . . . These are the annals of the people – of the common run of men' now spoke hypocritically of how 'the Word of God' was 'weaving the spirits of men together throughout the whole world'.[8] The Bible had indeed penetrated deeply into American public consciousness, even to the depths of its most enduring moral problem.

[5] Sarah Grimké, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and Other Essays*, ed. Elizabeth Ann Bartlett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 31–2.

[6] Quoted in Stephen Ward Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), p. 256.

[7] John Fox to Wilson, 3 April 1916, in Link (ed.), *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. XXXVI (1981), p. 481.

[8] Wilson, 'An Address', pp. 15–26; Woodrow Wilson, 'Remarks Celebrating the Centennial of the American Bible Society', in Link (ed.), *Papers*, vol. XXXVI, p. 631.

Since 1911 much has changed for the Bible in North America. But the significance of Scripture for a wide variety of individuals, churches, other institutions of civil society and for society as a whole remains undeniable. Charting that significance requires attention to many facets of a large reality.

In the beginning, religion

The Bible has enjoyed a central place in North American public life only because it has been so important in North American religion. The strongly Protestant cast of American history is indicated no better than in the intense personal application to Scripture undertaken by countless individuals in every generation from the early seventeenth century to the present. What Perry Miller once wrote about one portion of the Scriptures at one point in time more or less applies to the whole of American history: 'The Old Testament is truly so omnipresent in the American culture of 1800 or 1820 that historians have as much difficulty taking cognizance of it as of the air people breathed.'[9]

If personal attention to Scripture has been the precondition for the Bible's national importance, so also has the sermon been an ever-present engine broadcasting the messages of the Bible, but of course in stupendous and not always harmonious variety. Regular church attendance has varied between roughly a third and two-thirds of the population over the course of American history. Always for Protestants, and with surprising frequency for Catholics, Orthodox and the many Christian 'others' in North America, homilies and sermons with some connection to the sacred text have enjoyed a compelling, if underestimated, influence.

Beyond private reading and the sermon, the Bible has made its presence felt in countless other ways, some of which are explored in the rest of this chapter. But before examining those public uses, it is worth pausing to sample testimonies that reflect the deep personal attachment to Scripture that has supported its many public manifestations. When in the 1890s Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other prominent feminists published *The Woman's Bible*, they sought auxiliary contributions from a broad array of prominent American women. Their *Bible*, which was a mixed-genre combination of Scripture and commentary, promoted the reinterpretation of scriptural texts that to the editors had worked harm for women. But from at least one of the invited

[9] Perry Miller, 'The Garden of Eden and the Deacon's Meadow', *American Heritage* (December 1955), pp. 54–61 at p. 54.

contributors, Stanton received an unexpected answer. Frances Willard, head of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, was then at the height of her influence as a reformer, active not only against alcohol abuse but for a wide range of women's and children's rights. When she responded to Stanton's request, she provided a sophisticated defence of the Scriptures that had so dominated American civilisation: 'No such woman', she wrote, 'as Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, with her heart aflame against all forms of injustice and of cruelty . . . has ever been produced in a country where the Bible was not incorporated into the thoughts and the affections of the people and had not been so during many generations.' To be sure, Willard agreed that the Scriptures had often been used to demean women, but she also affirmed forthrightly, 'I believe that the Bible comes to us from God, and that it is a sufficient rule of faith and of practice.' Moreover, it was to Willard precisely the Bible that made possible 'a hallowed motherhood . . . because it raises woman up, and with her lifts toward heaven the world'. Willard closed by declaring that she purposed to live by the Bible, 'and holding to the truth which it brings to us, I expect to pass from this world to one even more full of beauty and of hope'.[10]

Willard's attitude was even more impressive when expressed by African Americans who, as a people, have suffered the most from coercive use of Scripture. Yet regardless how others have put it to use, for African Americans Scripture has been an indispensable mainstay, as it was, for example, to Julia A. Foote, an evangelist in the latter half of the nineteenth century who was converted while reading the Bible and who found strength in its pages throughout her life. Here is her autobiography describing a sad day on which her husband left for a long sea-voyage: 'While under this apparent cloud, I took the Bible to my closet, asking Divine aid. As I opened the book, my eyes fell on these words: "For thy Maker is thine husband." I then read the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah over and over again. It seemed to me that I had never seen it before. I went forth glorifying God.'[11]

Albert Raboteau records a similar story from about the same time that concerns a freed slave in Beaufort, North Carolina. This still illiterate woman 'carried a big Bible about with her through the woods and swamps'; her former mistress had helped her by turning 'down the leaves at the verses she knew by

[10] Frances Willard, 'Letter to Elizabeth Cady Stanton', in Elizabeth Cady Stanton (ed.), *The Original Feminist Attack on the Bible (The Woman's Bible)*, 2 vols. (New York: Arno, 1974 [1895, 1898]), vol. II, pp. 200–1.

[11] Julia A. Foote, *A Brand Plucked from the Fire: An Autobiographical Sketch by Mrs. Julia A. J. Foote* (1886), in Sue E. Houchins (ed.), *Spiritual Narratives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 1–124 at p. 61.

heart, and often she would sit down in the woods and open the big Bible at these verses, and repeat them aloud, and find strength and consolation'.[12]

The chairman of the translation committee of the New Revised Standard Version was Bruce M. Metzger, who by the time he worked on this new version had been active as a New Testament scholar at Princeton Theological Seminary for over half a century. His words of introduction to this translation state formally what Frances Willard, Julia Foote and the anonymous freedwoman from Beaufort expressed from their own experience:

> In traditional Judaism and Christianity, the Bible has been more than a historical document to be preserved or a classic of literature to be cherished and admired; it is recognized as the unique record of God's dealing with people over the ages. . . . The Bible carries its full message, not to those who regard it simply as a noble literary heritage of the past or who wish to use it to enhance political purposes and advance otherwise desirable goals, but to all persons and communities who read it so that they may discern and understand what God is saying to them.[13]

In the North American history of the Bible there has been much response to the Bible's noble literary heritage and countless uses for political and other purposes, both desirable and undesirable. Yet to study these matters without starting where Metzger begins would be to misunderstand that history completely.

Publishing

The publishing history of the Bible in America is a fascinating story in its own right.[14] From the first European settlements to the present, Americans have sustained an enormous rate of bible publication and an even more astonishing appetite for literature about the Bible. Margaret Hills's definitive bibliography for English-language bibles published between 1777 and 1956 lists more than 2,500 different editions appearing from at least 1,324 different printers (including 35 firms in Baltimore, 39 in Chicago, 41 in Hartford, 42 in Cincinnati, 157 in Boston, 224 in Philadelphia and 371 in New York).[15]

[12] Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The 'Invisible Institution' in the Antebellum South*, 2nd edn. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 240.
[13] Bruce M. Metzger, 'Introduction', in *New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs*, New Revised Standard Version (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. v–ix at p. ix.
[14] The premier account is Gutjahr, *American Bible*.
[15] Hills, *English Bible*.

Overall publishing statistics are hard to come by for the current bible-publishing industry, but at least two or three of the major firms each gross over $100 million annually from bible sales. One careful judgement from 2006 estimated that at least 25 million bibles had been sold the year before, and with the total take from all publishers probably well over half a billion dollars.[16] In that total, the Authorised or King James Version is no longer the best-seller, although the KJV and a number of its successors still constitute a very substantial percentage.[17]

Popular translations based on the KJV include the Revised Standard Version (RSV), with close to 100 million copies in print since it appeared in 1952 as the first modern translation to challenge the dominance of the KJV. The RSV has been updated in a thorough revision called the New Revised Standard Version (1990) that, like many recent translations and paraphrases, responds to contemporary ideology by offering as much gender neutrality as responsible translation principles permit. An even newer variation, also based on the RSV, is the English Standard Version (2001), which is sponsored by conservative evangelicals who are less concerned about meeting the gender conventions that have come to prevail since the rise of feminism. Other translations that are directly descended from the KJV include the American Standard Version (ASV) of 1901; the New American Standard Bible (1973), which is a modernisation of the ASV; and the New King James Version, brought out in 1982 by Thomas Nelson of Nashville, one of America's (and the world's) largest producers of bibles.[18] In a list of best-selling bibles for late 2012, compiled by a largely Protestant trade organisation, the KJV, the New KJV, the English Standard Version and the New American Standard Bible remained among the top ten best sellers, with the KJV securely in second place behind the New International Version.[19]

One of the important reasons for the continued commercial viability of the KJV is the translation's honoured place within the ever-growing Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The KJV continues to enjoy the full support

[16] Daniel Radosh, 'The Good Book Business', *The New Yorker*, 18 December 2006.

[17] Estimates pieced together from David Klinghoffer, 'A Feast of Good Books', *Publishers Weekly*, 11 October 2004, pp. 28–30; Cindy Crosby, 'Not your Mother's Bible', *Publishers Weekly*, 30 October 2006, pp. 29–30; and the website of *Christian Retailing*, www.christianretailing.com/about_cr.php?id=3 (accessed 13 April 2006).

[18] For relationships among these versions see David Dewey, *A User's Guide to Bible Translations* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), p. 193.

[19] See www.cbaonline.org/nm/documents/BSLs/Bible_Translations.pdf (accessed 24 December 2012).

of this church's leaders and so is carried wherever the Mormons take their faith in the English-speaking world.[20]

The contemporary publishing boom only sustains what had long been a grand publishing enterprise based mostly on the KJV. Yet it is important to remember that publication of the KJV has been far from the only story, and that it was not the first. Spanish Franciscans were translating biblical liturgies and Catholic devotional literature for the Rimucuan Indians of Florida in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries even before permanent English settlements existed in New England. Decades later the Massachusetts minister John Eliot translated the Bible into Algonquian (New Testament 1661, entire Bible 1663). Since Eliot, other labourers have rendered at least parts of the Bible into Apache, Cherokee, Cheyenne, Choctaw, Dakota, Hopi, Inupiat, Iroquoian, Kuskokwim, Mohawk, Muskogee, Navajo, Ojibwa and still other Native American languages. The first European-language bible published in the Thirteen Colonies was an edition of Martin Luther's German translation, with Apocrypha, that came from the press of Christopher Sower (or Saur) in Germantown, Pennsylvania.

The British monopoly on bible publishing meant that there were no KJV editions printed in America until after the War for Independence. Once the American colonies broke from Britain, indigenous publication began almost immediately, although the first effort was not successful. During the Revolution a Philadelphia printer, Robert Aitken, petitioned Congress for permission to publish an American edition of the KJV. Despite protests from a few churchmen who feared that no American printer could assure the accuracy of a fresh printing, Congress allowed Aitken to proceed. Unfortunately for Aitken, the end of hostilities with Britain in 1783 reopened the market to British publishers, who undersold Aitken and left him with a stagnating inventory.

Soon, however, American printers cut their costs to compete with imports. From the 1790s, alongside a successful evangelical surge led by Methodists and Baptists, bible publication and sales both soared. By the early nineteenth century local Bible societies were fuelling that boom. With a model borrowed from the British and Foreign Bible Society, the American venture gained the support of leading public figures who believed in the Bible as a supernatural source of spiritual life, such as the first president of the United States Congress (Elias Boudinot of New Jersey) and the first chief justice of the Supreme Court (John Jay of New York). It was also assisted by Enlightenment rationalists

[20] Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible*.

such as Thomas Jefferson who, though he regarded Scripture as only a human book, sent in his contributions as well.

The ABS, which was established in 1816 as a consolidation of local agencies, became the nation's leading force in Scripture distribution.[21] Its innovative printing techniques, publicity networks and hub-and-spoke distribution system provided influential guidance for the growth of American publishing in general. Major American publishers, such as the Methodist Harper Brothers and the Presbyterian Charles Scribner and Sons, built their businesses on the back of the bible trade as well as other religious books, and also by imitating the business innovations of the ABS.[22] The ABS still publishes Bibles in several translations, including its own Good News Bible and the Contemporary English Version. Early in the twenty-first century it was distributing over ten million complete Bibles or New Testaments each year along with many more tracts and booklets with smaller scriptural portions. In 2005 the Museum of Biblical Art (MOBIA) opened its doors at the Society's New York headquarters to highlight the historical importance of Scripture in literature and art.

The United States has also been home to other agencies that have accomplished prodigies of Scripture dissemination. The Gideons were established on 1 July 1899, at the local YMCA in Janesville, Wisconsin, by three travelling salesmen who wanted to encourage commercial travellers in the Christian life. In 1908, after a promise of support for a new distribution plan was offered by a convention in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the Gideons placed their first order for twenty-five copies of the Bible, which they gave to the Superior Hotel in Iron Mountain, Montana. In the decades since, this lay-originated, lay-funded and lay-run voluntary association has put the Bible, translated into eighty-six languages, into hotels and motels around the world. It has also passed out millions of New Testaments to schoolchildren and to men and women entering the military. Gideon Bibles have gone to prisons, inner-city rescue missions, hospitals (in large print), and aeroplanes, ships and trains. The 179 national auxiliaries of the Gideons currently distribute a total of a million bibles or New Testaments each week, with a total placement as of May 2005 approaching 1.2 billion copies of the Scriptures.[23]

The American missionary Cameron Townsend pioneered Protestant outreach to Indian tribes in Central America where in 1934 he organised what

[21] Wosh, *Spreading the Word*.
[22] Nord, *Faith in Reading*.
[23] Website of the Gideons International in Canada, www.gideons.ca (accessed 2 November 2005).

would become known as the Wycliffe Bible Translators/Summer Institute of Linguistics. Wycliffe workers, who now are enlisted from around the world, have translated at least a portion of the Bible into well over a thousand languages.

Even in the heyday of the KJV, with the Protestant dominance that Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson could take for granted, Bible publishing not connected to the KJV was a major enterprise. American Roman Catholics were long supplied with copies of the Douay-Challoner-Reims Version, and more recently the American Church has sponsored its own new translations, especially the New American Bible (1970). It has also cooperated in the publication of an ecumenical edition of the RSV. Beginning in the early twentieth century, American Jews have produced a number of significant translations of the Hebrew Scriptures. And among church communities using languages other than English, Scripture publication has been a big business. For the period 1860–1925, when distribution of the KJV was at its height, American publishers brought out at least 136 non-KJV English-language editions of 42 separate translations of the Scriptures. During the same period American publishers also produced at least 316 editions of complete Bibles (or complete Hebrew Scriptures) in forty languages other than English, including one hundred editions of complete German-language Bibles.[24] Contemporary best-seller lists reflect the continuing popularity of non-English versions, especially a modernisation of the sixteenth-century Reina-Valera Spanish translation.

The publishing of non-KJV translations has now become a major industry, but only after a long struggle.[25] Not until the twentieth century and the appearance of the ASV of 1901 did the KJV even begin to give way as the overwhelmingly dominant Bible of choice for American Protestants. Pioneering efforts that won some readers included a modern-language New Testament by Edgar Goodspeed (1923), a Greek professor at the University of Chicago, and an updated edition of the ASV by the Southern Baptist Helen Barrett Montgomery that was known as the *Century Translation of the New Testament* (1924). When the New Testament of the RSV was published in 1946, it became the first Bible beside the KJV to gain a broad national readership. Yet when the RSV's Old Testament was published in 1952, conservatives objected strongly to what they read as unwarranted deference to Jewish readings. Particular fire fell on the RSV translators for rendering a key phrase in Isaiah 7:14 as 'a young

[24] Hills, *English Bible*; and for foreign-language Bibles *The National Union Catalog, Pre-1956 Imprints* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1980), vols. LIII and LIV.

[25] On all such controversies the key authority is Thuesen, *In Discordance with the Scriptures*.

woman' instead of the KJV's 'a virgin', which Christian readers had commonly read as a prophecy of Jesus Christ. As a result of this controversy, support for the KJV rebounded, and other Protestants were stimulated to undertake their own translations.

The most important of those efforts was sponsored by the New York International Bible Society and led in 1978 to the publication of the New International Version (NIV). The support this version garnered from a wide range of moderate and conservative Protestants, during another period of evangelical resurgence, has made it the best-selling American bible, with well over 200 million copies in print. When, however, a revision committee brought out a revised Today's New International Version in 2002, which replaced some male-specific pronouns with gender-neutral renderings, the history that led to the NIV was repeated. Conservatives who objected to this translation strategy expressed their criticism as vociferously as earlier foes of the RSV had done. They also moved to sponsor new texts such as the English Standard Version and the Holman Christian Standard Bible (from the publishers for the Southern Baptist Convention).

Even as translation wars attended efforts to secure a successor to the KJV, the landscape for bible publication was changing dramatically. A harbinger of change was the *Living Bible*, a paraphrase by Kenneth Taylor, which he began in 1956 on his daily commute from the Chicago suburbs to his job at Moody Press in the city. Taylor's family had complained about difficulties in understanding the KJV that they read each night, so Taylor paraphrased passages from the KJV for their use. The result, eventually, was the immensely popular *Living Bible*, which, with strategic publicity provided by Billy Graham, for a few years in the mid-1970s accounted for nearly half of all Scriptures sold in the United States. So it was that a reading public that had raised objections to the RSV, though prepared carefully by a learned committee, took to itself a paraphrased edition of the Scriptures prepared by a single individual.

Changes in Bible translations have gone far beyond disputes over the RSV or the innovative labours of single individuals. When American commercialism entered a new phase in the 1950s, so too did the translation and marketing of the Bible. Not so much theology or ecclesiastical decisions, but a society experiencing unprecedented wealth, unprecedented mobility, unprecedented college education and unprecedented merchandising through the new medium of television created a new era for bible publishers.

In this environment a number of new translations won the kind of broad following that was impossible so long as the KJV dominated the English-speaking market. They included notable imports from Britain such as the

New English Bible (New Testament, 1961; complete, 1970), J. B. Phillips's New Testament in Modern English (1962); and the Catholic-sponsored Jerusalem Bible (1966). Since 1970 Americans have produced at least twenty-five new translations or paraphrases of their own. Most have appeared under Christian auspices, although the Jewish Publication Society also sponsored a notable translation in 1985 of the Hebrew Scriptures, *Tanakh*.

Led by Thomas Nelson, Zondervan Corporation (publisher of the NIV) and HarperSanFrancisco (the main publisher of the RSV and the New RSV), the new versions have been marketed with a vengeance. Niche publishing, which characterises American book distribution as a whole, also dominates Bible sales. In 2004 six of the ten best-selling editions were different marketing vehicles for the same translation: The NIV Study Bible, The Life Application Bible (NIV), the Student Bible (NIV), the Teen Study Bible (NIV), NIV Thinline Bible, The Adventure Bible (NIV). Large advertising budgets now support the sale of editions such as *Seek Find: The Bible for All People*, *The Bible in 90 Days*, *The 100-Minute Bible*, *Grace for the Moment Devotional Bible* and *Bibelzine Redefine* in snappy magazine format.[26]

The post-KJV world of bible publishing, with the Scriptures available in nearly inexhaustible variety, creates a new situation for both believers and the public at large. The positive result from this plethora of new versions is significant – the Bible now speaks as a much more contemporaneous, a much more understandable, book than when it appeared in the language of the early seventeenth century. But with this positive comes also significant negatives: the proliferation of texts disqualifies any one of them from speaking with natural familiarity to those who use other versions; the once-common practice of scriptural memorisation has become hopelessly confused; and debates over which new translation best captures the original Hebrew and Greek can sometimes turn nasty, with particular venom generated by what Freud called 'the narcissism of small difference'.

Popular culture

However difficult it may be to define the exact place of the Bible for ordinary people, Scripture has always been a vital element in American popular life. The extent of its influence is suggested at a most basic level by the marking of the land. The designation of American places with names taken from

[26] Crosby, 'Not your Mother's Bible'.

the Bible was especially prominent in the early nineteenth century as settlers spread westward throughout the continent: for example, Zoar, Ohio (Gen. 13.10), Ruma, Illinois (2 Kings 23:36), Mount Tirzah, North Carolina (Josh. 12.24), Zela, West Virginia (Josh. 18:28), Promised Land, Arkansas (from Deut. 9:28), as well as fourteen variations on Bethany, sixteen on Bethlehem, seventeen on Beulah, forty-seven on Bethel, sixty-one on Eden (eight of those in Iowa alone) and ninety-five on Salem.[27]

In the popular media, Scripture has also been omnipresent. Fiction, hymns and poetry employing biblical themes have always made up a huge proportion of American publishing. Many of the United States' most distinguished writers have regularly employed phrases from the Bible to convey powerful sentiments with extraordinary verbal economy. Herman Melville began *Moby Dick* with the narrator's simple but highly charged reference to a story from the Hebrew Scriptures: 'Call me Ishmael'. Nathaniel Hawthorne and Walt Whitman entitled significant works 'Adam'; Ernest Hemingway drew on Ecclesiastes 1:5 for his title *The Sun Also Rises*; William Faulkner echoed the lament of King David with the novel *Absalom, Absalom!* (2 Sam. 19:4) and the story of ancient Israel with *Go Down, Moses* (Exod. 19:21); Eugene O'Neill and Sylvia Plath each used the title 'Lazarus'; Peter Devries in 1961 published *Blood of the Lamb* (Rev. 12:11); and in 2005 Marilynne Robinson was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in literature for *Gilead* (Jer. 8:22). For these influential authors, the ability to evoke vast worlds of meaning with a simple phrase depended on widespread biblical knowledge.

Beyond the sphere of high culture, stories drawn directly from biblical materials might not win literary renown, but the American people have never been able to get enough of them. The first important novel of this kind was William Ware's *Julian: Or, Scenes in Judea* (1856), which described gospel events through the letters of its fictional protagonist. General Lew Wallace's *Ben Hur* (1880), which climaxed in a breathtaking chariot race, is probably the supreme example of biblical fiction. It became a marketing phenomenon when Sears and Roebuck printed up a million inexpensive copies, and it inspired an immensely successful touring drama (complete with surging horses on a treadmill) and two motion pictures. Other similar books have had nearly as much success, including Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis?* (1896), Lloyd Douglas's *The Robe* (1942), Marjorie Holmes's *Two from Galilee* (1972) and several novels by both Taylor Caldwell and Frank G. Slaughter. One of the

[27] Leighly, 'Biblical Place-Names'.

most unusual examples of this fiction was written first in Yiddish by a Jewish author, Sholem Asch. When published in English in 1939, *The Nazarene* won praise from Christians for its sensitive portrayal of contemporary customs at the time of Christ.

A different kind of popular writing uses biblical interpretation, or biblical speculation, as the framework for more intensely up-to-date fiction. One very popular example is the *Left Behind* series by Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye, with at least sixteen novels published since 1995. This series fictionalises the near future of the world as defined by the authors' biblical theology of pre-millennial dispensationalism. The novels were published by Tyndale Press, which had been founded by Kenneth Taylor, author of the popular *Living Bible* paraphrase. They represent a kind of anti–*Da Vinci Code* (2003), the best-selling novel by Dan Brown that spins out a Gnostic interpretation of the Gospels and early Christian history in the guise of a contemporary thriller. Both the *Left Behind* series and the *Da Vinci Code* have produced marketing bonanzas approved by the authors, including audio dramatisations, foreign-language translations, spin-off volumes, video games, adaptations for young people, graphic novels, CDs and films. Both have also led to many parodies and refutations that, from opposite ideological angles, attack the theologies at work in these fictional treatments. What both illustrate is an ability to exploit markets in which at least vague familiarity with the Bible is widespread and interest in Bible-like supernaturalism remains very much alive.

Many blockbuster biblical novels eventually found their way to the screen, but they have usually not done as well as films created directly for this market.[28] Cecil B. De Mille's *The King of Kings* from 1927 (with H. B. Warner as a diffident Jesus) and George Stevens's *The Greatest Story Ever Told* from 1965 (with Max von Sydow as a Jesus who was allowed to show traces of humour) were among the most memorable, but there have been many others. More recently, *Jésus de Montréal* (1989), by the Quebec director Denys Arcand, offered a serious account of what a radical passion play might look like in a modern urban setting, and Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) was both controversial (because of verging close to blaming Jews as such for the crucifixion) and very popular (because of sophisticated production values combined with successful marketing to conservative Protestants and Catholics).

If anything, the Bible has been more obviously at work in the popular culture of African Americans than among whites. Slaves made a sharp distinction between the Bible their owners preached to them and the Bible they

[28] See especially Chattaway, 'Jesus in the Movies'.

discovered for themselves. Under slavery, stringent regulations often existed against unsupervised preaching, and sometimes even against owning bibles. But with or without permission, slaves made special efforts to hear black preachers. One slave left this striking testimony: 'a yellow [light-complexioned] man preached to us. She [the slave owner] had him preach how we ought to obey our master and missy if we want to go to heaven, but when she wasn't there, he came out with straight preachin' from the Bible.'[29]

Blacks sang and preached about Adam and Eve and the Fall, about 'wrestlin' Jacob' who 'would not let [God] go', about Moses and the Exodus from Egypt, about Daniel in the lions' den, about Jonah in the belly of the fish, about the birth of Jesus and his death and future return. The slaves' profound embrace of Scripture created a climate for Bible reading and biblical preaching that has continued among African Americans since the Civil War.[30]

The Bible as a theme in popular communications is hardly exhausted by songs, poems, stories and films. In the visual arts, biblical materials have provided inspiration for German immigrants embellishing needlework with *Fraktur* print, lithographers such as Currier and Ives, countless painters at countless levels of ability, and a few masters acclaimed by both public and critics (such as Edward Hicks who in the mid-nineteenth century painted several versions of *The Peaceable Kingdom*). In 1964 a thought-provoking book was published on the biblical content of a famous comic strip (Robert Short, *The Gospel According to Peanuts*), and two of the most popular rock operas of the 1970s, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Godspell*, were based on the biblical Gospels. Since the beginning of mass-marketed religious objects about the time of the Civil War, both Catholics and Protestants have also purchased immense quantities of pictures, statues, games, children's toys, paperweights, refrigerator magnets, jewellery, T-shirts, greeting cards, calendars and business cards decorated with biblical motifs.

The Jesus movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s accelerated the adaptation of biblical material to material culture. Jesus People wanted it known that they had found something more life-fulfilling than sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll, but they used the paraphernalia that had arisen around sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll to make that statement. Thus, they emblazoned T-shirts, bumper stickers and buttons with day-glow Christian symbols, often simply

[29] Quoted in Charles V. Hamilton, *The Black Preacher in America* (New York: William Morrow, 1972), p. 39.

[30] Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977); James Weldon Johnson, J. Rosamond Johnson and Lawrence Brown, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* (New York: Viking, 1925).

Bible verses, in order to use the cultural trappings of the counter-culture to show the counter-culture a better way.[31]

The quantity of steadily or spectacularly selling books about the Bible has also rolled on as an ever-surging tide, ranging from the most erudite scholarship to the most blatant populism. Since the 1960s the Eerdmans Publishing Company in Grand Rapids, Michigan, has been steadily selling the weighty ten-volume English translation of Gerhard Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, with its detailed study of all the significant words in the Greek New Testament. In the 1970s the best-selling book of any kind (except the Bible itself) was Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*, a breathless interpretation of current events that speculated on how they might be fulfilling prophetic passages of Scripture interpreted by the principles of dispensational theology.

Allene Stuart Phy, editor of one of the best books on the subject, once observed that there is often a 'ludicrous discrepancy … between the ancient wisdom of the scriptures and the vulgarities of American popular culture'. But Phy also saw clearly that even these 'vulgarities' show the 'profound ways in which the holy books of the Jewish and Christian religions relate to [the] lives of Americans'.[32]

Politics

From the beginning the Bible has provided powerful themes for Americans to define themselves politically, both as a people and as a nation. During the American Revolution countless preachers exploited the words of Scripture to drive home their vision of a liberated America. In 1773 a Connecticut Congregationalist based a discourse on the virtues of home rule and the folly of government by a foreign power on Exodus 1:8: 'Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.' A year later a Presbyterian *Sermon on Tea* took Colossians 2:21 for its text: 'Touch not; taste not; handle not.'[33] These creative uses of phrases from the Bible have been repeated at many other moments, both great and small, in American history.

Significantly, these political uses of Scripture are by no means restricted to ancient history. On 20 January 1961 John F. Kennedy quoted the KJV twice at

[31] Larry Eskridge, *God's Forever Family: The Jesus People Movement in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[32] Phy, *The Bible and Popular Culture*, p. vii.

[33] Benjamin Trumbull, *A Discourse* (New Haven: Thomas & Samuel Green, 1773); David Ramsay quoted in James McLachlan (ed.), *Princetonians 1748–1768* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 518.

strategic places in his inaugural presidential address. Eight years later Richard Nixon took the presidential oath of office with his hand placed on a bible opened to the same text as Lyndon Johnson had chosen for his inauguration in 1964: Isaiah 2:4 ('And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more').[34]

Although by the early twenty-first century the Bible seemed to have become a campaign document of the Republican Party, one of the most adept citers of Scripture in the modern period was Bill Clinton. In his acceptance speech as the Democratic candidate for president on 16 July 1992 Clinton quoted or paraphrased three passages and also used three other biblical phrases at strategic moments, including a reference to a 'New Covenant' (from Jer. 31:31 and elsewhere).[35] In the twenty-first century the Republican George W. Bush and the Democrat Barack Obama both quoted Scripture as frequently as any previous presidents.

Public attention to Scripture has recently tied the American judiciary in knots. On a single day in 2005 the Supreme Court announced its rulings on two cases concerning the display of the Ten Commandments on public property. In *Van Orden v. Perry* the court ruled that a stone monolith of the Commandments on the grounds of the Texas state capitol in Austin was acceptable; but in *McCreary County v. American Civil Liberties Union of Kentucky* it ruled that a framed printing in the Whitley City, Kentucky, courthouse was not. While it was possible to find consistency in these rulings, which hinged on the environments contextualising display of the Commandments, the opposing decisions communicated more confusion than clarity.

Public use of the Bible in formal or informal national occasions includes two of the greatest speeches in American history: Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, delivered from the east side of the Capitol Building on 4 March 1865,[36] and Martin Luther King, Jr's climactic address at the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington for Civil Rights on

[34] Davis Newton Lott (ed.), *The Presidents Speak: The Inaugural Addresses of the American Presidents from Washington to Nixon*, rev. edn. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969), pp. 270, 271, 283.

[35] William J. Clinton, 'Acceptance Speech to the Democratic National Convention', the American presidency project at www.presidency.ucsb.edu/shownomination.php?convid=7 (accessed 5 April 2006).

[36] Quotations are from 'Second Inaugural Address', in Roy P. Basler (ed.), *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 9 vols. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953), vol. IX, pp. 332–3.

28 August 1963.[37] The extraordinary force of these speeches owed much to their anchorage in Scripture. They also serve to illustrate four ways that the Bible has been put to use in American politics.[38]

First is a *rhetorical* or *stylistic* echoing of Scripture, where speakers, in order to increase the gravity of their words, employ a phraseology, cadence, or tone that parallels the classic phrasing of the KJV. This usage was illustrated in another one of Abraham Lincoln's famous speeches, the Gettysburg Address, which begins 'four score and seven years ago'. To a lesser extent Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address used the same kind of rhetoric. But among the most dramatic examples of such a biblical style was Martin Luther King, Jr's speech in August 1963, which was filled with biblically sounding phrases:

> The Negro . . . finds himself in exile in his own land . . . now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. . . . Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. . . . Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

A second usage of the Bible is *evocative*, where speakers put actual Bible phrases to use, but as fragments jerked out of original context in order to heighten the persuasive power of what they are trying to say. William Jennings Bryan was an acknowledged master of this style, as in his memorable oration opposing the gold standard, delivered as part of the platform debate at the 1896 Democratic national convention in Chicago: 'You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns; you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.'[39] Abraham Lincoln used the Bible in this way when he took a phrase from Matthew 12:25 as the keynote for his famous 'house divided' speech of 1858, and when in the Second Inaugural he took a phrase from Genesis 3:19 to say it was 'strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces'. In his 'I have a dream' oration, King quoted words from Amos 5:24 similarly in order to proclaim: 'We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.'

Needless to say, rhetorical and evocative uses of the Bible have been the most common in American public speech. But in the orations by King and Lincoln there were also a *political* use and a *theological* use.

[37] Quotations are from Martin Luther King, Jr., *I Have a Dream: Writings and Speeches that Changed the World*, ed. James Melvin Washington (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), pp. 102–6.

[38] The categories are adapted from Joseph R. Fornieri, *Abraham Lincoln's Political Faith* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), pp. 38–69.

[39] William Jennings Bryan, 'Speech Concluding Debate on the Chicago Platform', in *The First Battle: The Story of the Campaign of 1896* (Chicago: W. B. Conkey, 1896), p. 206.

In *political* deployment of Scripture the Bible is quoted or paraphrased to make a direct assertion about how public life should be ordered. The difference from merely rhetorical or evocative use is the speaker's implicit claim that Scripture is not just supplying a conceptual universe from which to extract morally freighted phrases, but that it positively sanctions the speaker's vision for how public life should be ordered. Toward the end of his great speech, King quoted Isaiah 40:4 in order to enlist a divine sanction for his vision of a society free of racial discrimination: 'I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places shall be made plain, the crooked places shall be made straight and the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.' The fact that this passage from Isaiah was also applied in Luke 3:5 to Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry only heightened the moral significance of what King wanted to assert about the desirability of a racially healed society.

In his Second Inaugural Lincoln did something similar when he combined resignation before the workings of providence with an indictment of the ones who had asked God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces. For that combination of opinions a quotation from Matthew 18:7 was Lincoln's clincher: 'The prayers of both [sides] could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh"!'

Political use of Scripture is more effective, but also more dangerous, than the merely rhetorical or evocative. The risk is the sanctified polarisation that has so often attended the identification of a particular political position with the specific will of God. At its most extreme, that sanctified polarisation can become an excuse for self-righteous violence. More often, the danger is that a worthy mandate from Scripture is simply disregarded as impractical, untimely or quixotic. Lincoln's paraphrase in the Second Inaugural from Matthew 7:1 ('Let us judge not that we be not judged'), which he used to short-circuit the assignment of blame for the continuation of slavery, illustrates this more prosaic danger. Despite Lincoln's scriptural mandate for charity, judgement from all sides of all sides has never ceased for interpretations of the Civil War.

Yet political use of Scripture can also be remarkably effective. When a specific political position is successfully identified with the purposes of God, that position can be defended, promoted and advanced with tremendous moral energy. In the speeches of Lincoln and King, strategic quoting from the Bible played a significant part in reassuring many Americans that Lincoln's opposition to slavery and King's opposition to racial discrimination really did

embody a divine imperative. Without widespread acceptance of the idea that these were divine imperatives mandated by Scripture, it is hard to imagine that either opposition to slavery or opposition to racial discrimination could have carried the day.

Finally, after rhetorical, evocative and political usages, there is the *theological* deployment of Scripture, where the Bible is quoted or paraphrased to make an assertion about God and the meaning of his acts or providential control of the world. In American public life, Lincoln's Second Inaugural may represent its only instance. What he said pertained not primarily to the fate of the nation, and not even to a defence of his own political actions, but to the sovereign character and mysterious purposes of God. For that statement, a quotation from Psalm 19:9 provided the last word:

> If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope – fervently do we pray – that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled up by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether.'

It can be argued that Lincoln's public articulation of scripturally derived theological principle about the sovereignty of God over human events explains the unprecedented humility that followed in the Second Inaugural's peroration. In other words, without a scriptural theology concerning the righteousness of God's ultimate judgement there would have been no proclamation of 'malice toward none' and 'charity toward all'. Both Lincoln's theological use of Scripture and his profession of charity to political foes have been extraordinarily uncommon in American history.

The orations by King and Lincoln were unusual in large part because they used much biblical testimony at unusual public moments during times of great national crisis. King's dramatic address underscored a turning point in the nation's moral history when, nearly a century after the end of the war to end slavery, the United States was moving haltingly to confront the bitter realities of racial discrimination. For Lincoln, a calm meditation near the conclusion of the nation's bloodiest conflict became the occasion for profound

reflections on the costs of justice delayed, the blessings of charity for all, and the unfathomable mysteries of divine providence. In both cases the Bible was indispensable for shaping what the speakers said. In fact, as David L. Chappell has argued for the Civil Rights movement in which King's 'I have a dream' speech figured so prominently, only such a biblically rooted motivation possessed the moral energy to galvanise and sustain the movement.[40]

The Bible has regularly served ignoble purposes in American politics, and it has often been simply another part of the standard declamatory background. Yet on occasion, as with practitioners such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and Abraham Lincoln, the political use of the Bible has evoked depths rarely found except in personal devotion and traditional liturgy.

Minorities

Religious communities in the United States and Canada for which the Bible has been central – but not the Bible in English, or not the English-language Bible used by the majority population – have created a rich, extraordinarily varied history. Two of the most important of such minorities are Jews and African Americans. By no means do their experiences represent all other minorities, but they do suggest something about the breadth of the Bible's North American presence.

As even a moment's reflection might predict, Jewish commentary on the Bible and the United States has been unusually telling. To the present day Jewish organisations resist efforts to define the United States as a Christian nation, Jewish voters shy away from appeals by the Republican Party featuring 'biblical values', and influential Jewish spokespersons regularly protest against any trespassing of the division between church and state. At the same time, from the founding of the nation, a prominent strand of Jewish opinion has embraced the proposition that the United States can be identified as an unusually biblical nation, and has defended this identification as a positive good. Daniel Elazar, as a recent example, often stressed both the biblical roots of what he called 'the fundamental elements of a Jewish political tradition' and the strong connections he perceived between Hebrew covenantal reasoning and the development of American 'federal democracy'.[41]

[40] David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

[41] For example, Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant and Civil Society: The Constitutional Matrix of Modern Democracy* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1998).

More often, ambiguity has prevailed in Jewish assessments of the Bible and American life. Thus, in the Revolutionary period, Pennsylvania Jews in 1783 petitioned the state to change its requirement that members of the general assembly acknowledge 'the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament' as divinely inspired; but the very next year Rabbi Hendla Jochanan van Oettingen composed a prayer that employed ancient Jewish history as a means of blessing the new United States: 'As Thou didst give of Thy glory to David, son of Jesse, and to Solomon his son Thou didst give wisdom greater than all of men, so mayst Thou grant intelligence, wisdom, and knowledge to our lords, the rulers of these thirteen states.'[42] Only a few decades later, Rabbi Isaac Meyer Wise of Cincinnati spoke out against the practice of requiring readings from the King James Bible in the public schools, but in 1854 Wise also published a book, *History of the Israelitish Nation*, in which he suggested that American principles of democratic republicanism and church–state separation had been adumbrated in the Hebrew Scriptures.

The tension between Jewish identity and American identity also defined the context for a remarkable assertion by Solomon Schechter, which he delivered in 1903 at the dedication of the main building of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City. According to Schechter the United States was 'a creation of the Bible . . . and the Bible is still holding its own, exercising enormous influence as a real spiritual power, in spite of all the destructive tendencies'.[43] Commentary from Schechter is especially interesting, since his wide range of experience before coming in 1902 to the United States and New York's Jewish Theological Seminary included birth and early years in Romania, education in Poland, Austria and Germany, teaching assignments at Cambridge and the University of London, and greatly esteemed work on ancient biblical texts in Egypt. The strong impression made on Schechter by reading Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address as a youth in Foscani in Romania, perhaps in a Yiddish translation, may have influenced his later views, for Schechter reported that when he contemplated the sentences of this address that were quoted earlier, he could 'scarcely believe that they formed a part of a message addressed in the nineteenth century to an assembly composed largely of men of affairs'.[44]

[42] Hendla Jochanan van Oettingen, 'Philadelphia Jews Appeal for Civil Rights – 1783' and '"Sound the Great Horn for our Freedom": A Shearith Israel Prayer – 1784', in Jonathan D. Sarna, Benny Kraut and Samuel Joseph (eds.), *Jews and the Founding of the Republic* (New York: Markus Wiener, 1985), pp. 95, 127.

[43] Solomon Schechter, 'The Seminary as a Witness', in *Seminary Addresses and Other Papers* (n.p.: Burning Bush Press, 1959 [1915]), pp. 48–50 at p. 48.

[44] Solomon Schechter, 'Abraham Lincoln', in *Seminary Addresses*, pp. 145–68 at p. 156.

Schechter's defence of the biblical character of the United States came at a time when he was actively supporting Jewish efforts to end Christian Bible readings in New York public schools, when he was working to establish an independent network of private Jewish day-schools, and when he was offering full support to the Jewish Publication Society's efforts at producing its own translation of the Hebrew Bible.

Although Schechter acknowledged problems in the Biblio-centric character of the United States, he mostly wanted to defend that character. He was, thus, pleased that trust in the Bible was standing up well against what he called 'all the destructive tendencies, mostly of foreign make'. And he was convinced that, despite genuine difficulties, 'the large bulk of the American people have, in matters of religion, retained their sobriety and loyal adherence to the Scriptures, as their Puritan forefathers did'. Yet his final point came back to the Bible rather than to America. For his audience in New York City in 1903 he spelled out in great detail how it would be appropriate for ancient Jewish teaching to adapt to the American context – by, for example, respecting American democratic traditions and so downplaying autocratic tendencies in Jewish life brought from Europe to the New World. Yet the point of a *Jewish* theological seminary must be 'to teach the doctrines and the literature of the religion which is as old as history itself and as wide as the world'. An American setting for studying Judaism was important precisely because of how much Bible had gone into the shaping of the United States. But because the study of Judaism took in all of history and implicated the whole world, it, rather than the United States, had to remain the highest concern.[45]

To turn from Jewish to African American understandings of the Bible and American history is to shift universes, but also to find similar depth of sustained engagement. African American public use of Scripture began as soon as black voices entered the public arena during the Revolutionary era. The first publications from the first African American to appear in print, the enslaved poet Jupiter Hammon, were mostly meditations on biblical themes. The first African American woman to be published was the emancipated slave Phillis Wheatley, whose poems were likewise immersed in biblical contexts. David George, a slave liberated by the British during the War and a pioneering pastor of black Baptist churches in the United States, Canada and Sierra Leone, was just as preoccupied with Scripture.[46]

[45] Schechter, 'Seminary as Witness'.

[46] Sandra A. O'Neale, *Jupiter Hammon and the Biblical Beginnings of African-American Literature* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1993); Phillip Richards, 'Phillis Wheatley and Literary Americanization', *American Quarterly* 44 (1992), pp. 163–91; and Grant Gordon,

The great national confusion that has always bedevilled African Americans was between slavery and race. This confusion exerted unusual influence on Christian interpretations of Scripture during the first decades of nationhood. The steady stream of published writings on the Bible and slavery that had existed since the eighteenth century became a great flood of works from the early 1830s onwards. Authors of nearly every denominational stripe wrestled intensely to interpret the many scriptural passages that seemed simply to take slavery for granted as a natural part of society. By contrast, far less attention was devoted to what the Bible affirmed, also in many passages, about the equality of all races and peoples before God. As a consequence, by the time of the Civil War the weight of American biblical interpretation was clearly tipping in favour of slavery as a biblical institution, despite some opposition to that conclusion and even more uneasiness about the black-only form of chattel slavery that was practised in the United States.[47]

For African American Bible believers, the result was doubly unfortunate. On the one hand, they could see more clearly than any of their contemporaries that studying what the Bible had to say about slavery could never illuminate the American dilemma unless the Bible was also studied for what it had to say about race. On the other hand, because of the racist character of American public life, the considerable amount of writing that African Americans produced on the Bible and slavery received almost no general attention.

Despite this disadvantage, black Americans in the antebellum decades regularly offered their own forceful arguments from the universal implications of scriptural teaching. The *Appeal . . . to the Coloured Citizens of the World* by David Walker, a free black from Boston, which was published in 1829, used the Bible extensively in crafting one powerful manifesto. In one of the many contrasts Walker drew between the universal teachings of Scripture and its particular use by Americans, he referred to the 'Great Commission' from Matthew 28:18–20, where the resurrected Christ sent out his followers to 'teach all nations . . . to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you'. Walker berated his white readers with a challenge: 'You have the Bible in your hands with this very injunction – Have you been to Africa, teaching the inhabitants thereof the words of the Lord Jesus?' No, it was just the reverse. Americans 'entered among us, and learnt us the art of throat-cutting, by setting us to fight, one against another, to take each other as prisoners of war, and sell

From Slavery to Freedom: The Life of David George, Pioneer Black Baptist Minister (Hantsport, Nova Scotia: Baptist Heritage in Atlantic Canada, 1992).

[47] This conclusion is expanded in Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

to you for small bits of calicoes, old swords, knives, etc. to make slaves for you and your children'. To Walker, such behaviour was a direct contradiction of Scripture: 'Can the American preachers appeal unto God, the Maker and Searcher of hearts, and tell him, with the Bible in their hands, that they made no distinction on account of men's colour?'[48]

More than thirty years later, just as war was breaking out, Frederick Douglass said about the same thing when he spotlighted race as the keystone of American slavery: 'nobody at the North, we think, would defend Slavery, even from the Bible, but for this color distinction.' Douglass felt that 'Color makes all the difference' in deciding how Christianity was applied in the United States. He described the Bible exalted as 'full of the Gospel of Liberty to one race' while at the same time mined for 'arguments in justification of the slavery of another'.[49]

A particularly intriguing example of African American biblical interpretation that followed in the train of David Walker and Frederick Douglass came early in the motion picture era, more than half a century after the constitutional prohibition of slavery. The huge success of D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, which was released in 1915 as a cinematic version of the Reverend Thomas Dixon's novel *The Clansman*, posed a compelling challenge. Several times in *The Birth of a Nation* biblical words or images were used to make a point about the degeneracy of African Americans and the triumph of the noble Ku Klux Klan over the despicable regimes of Reconstruction. Most dramatic was the film's closing scenes, which mixed visions of civilised whites triumphing over bestial blacks with apocalyptic images of Jesus coming to establish a millennial reign of joyful peace.[50]

In response to these provocations, leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) tried, in vain, to block showings of the film. But they also promoted plans to produce their own film to counter *The Birth of a Nation*. Out of this effort eventually came a film directed by John W. Noble, entitled *The Birth of a Race*, which was released in 1919.[51]

[48] David Walker, *Appeal in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, ed. Charles M. Wiltse (New York: Hill & Wang, 1965), p. 42.

[49] Frederick Douglass, 'The Pro-Slavery Mob and the Pro-Slavery Ministry', *Douglass' Monthly* (March 1861), pp. 417–18.

[50] *The Birth of a Nation*, Motion Picture/TV Reading Room, Library of Congress.

[51] The *Birth of a Race*, Motion Picture/TV Reading Room, Library of Congress. For thorough discussion see Judith Weisenfeld, '"For the Cause of Mankind": The Bible, Racial Uplift, and Early Race Movies', in Wimbush (ed.), *African Americans and the Bible*, pp. 728–42.

Like *The Birth of a Nation*, *The Birth of a Race* eventually made a series of grand statements about well known American heroes and patriotic events that, as the film put it, brought about for the first time in the world's history 'a government of the people, for the people and by the people'. But seventy of the film's ninety minutes were devoted to four biblical episodes – the creation of Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood, Moses and the exodus from Egypt, and the life and passion of Jesus – that featured an interpretation of the Bible as the charter of 'Equality' for all humanity. Thus, the film began with a dedication to 'you who love your fellow-men'. Next, Noah's family, which for many Americans had provided the source for a racist interpretation of the Curse of Canaan, was described in this film as living together harmoniously. Moses was given the greatest block of time as the one who called for 'the liberation of his people'. Then as head shots of listeners from Africa, the Far East and Europe flashed on the screen, Jesus was portrayed as teaching 'all races . . . Christ made no distinction between them – His teachings were for all'.

Even in the film's last twenty minutes, with a rapid jumble of Christopher Columbus, Paul Revere, signers of the Declaration of Independence, Abraham Lincoln, and racially integrated troops marching off to the First World War, a universal message predominated. With dubious theology, but a clear intent to maintain the film's major themes, it described Lincoln's assassination as kindling 'the torch of freedom – which today is the Light of the World'. Where *The Birth of a Nation* used race as a device for identifying heroes and villains, *The Birth of a Race* used the word in its more general sense of encompassing all people.

Even more than Jewish engagement with Scripture, the African American use of the Bible – as illustrated by David Walker, Frederick Douglass and *The Birth of a Race* – echoed much of the standard patriotic themes of white Americans. Where it differed was in the contention that the race singled out for special divine consideration in Scripture was the human race. That African American conviction was not representative of all minority understandings of the Bible in American history, since minorities could sometimes be as exclusive about Scripture in their own limited spheres as widespread interpretations from the KJV were in mainstream American life. What was representative, as also with American Jews, were the intensity and effects of scriptural conviction that paralleled what was found in the majority culture as well.

Scholarship

Biblical scholarship in North America has always been the preserve of learned men (and, since the mid-nineteenth century, women) employing technical

skills in ancient languages, archaeology, history and hermeneutics. But North American biblical interpretation has also always been influenced by general social and cultural values, especially a strong democratic impetus. Yet in America there has also been a history of deference counteracting the democratic tendency – deference to ecclesiastical authority, especially among Catholics and traditional Protestant denominations; to academic authorities, especially during the last century among mainstream Protestants; and to the populist leaders of sectarian movements, especially among evangelicals, fundamentalists and Pentecostals.

Thorough study of Scripture was one of the trademarks of the Puritan ministers who guided the early settlements of New England. The chief ornament of Puritan scriptural preoccupation was the *Biblia Americana* of Cotton Mather, a manual of 6,000 manuscript pages containing textual commentary, Jewish antiquities, harmonisation of contradictions and specifications of fulfilled prophecy – all garnished with citations from recent European scholarship. It says something about the capacity of a new civilisation to sustain advanced scholarship that Mather died in 1727 without having found a publisher, and the book is only now appearing in print.[52] Only slightly less industrious was Jonathan Edwards, Mather's younger contemporary. Over a diligent adult life in which study of Scripture took precedence over even his most urgent theological writing, Edwards gathered 5,500 notes and comments on biblical texts into his own personal manuscript. Thankfully, this great compilation has at last been published.[53]

Immediately after the American Revolution the views of free-thinkers, deists and Enlightenment ideologues created multiple controversies concerning the Bible. Some advanced notions were spread by heroes of the Revolution such as Ethan Allen and especially Thomas Paine. With its catalogue of complaints against traditional views, Paine's *The Age of Reason: Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (published in two parts, 1794 and 1795) sparked rebuttals from dozens of Americans. Paine's friend, President Thomas Jefferson, embraced critical views, but also testified to the continuing centrality of Scripture in American life. Twice in his later years Jefferson prepared his own abridgements of the Gospels by cutting out the miracle stories

[52] The first of a projected ten volumes has appeared as Cotton Mather, *Biblia Americana*, vol. I: *Genesis*, ed. Reiner Smolinski (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic and Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

[53] Jonathan Edwards, *The 'Blank Bible'*, in Stephen J. Stein (ed.), *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), vol. XXIV, 2 parts.

and references to Jesus as divine. But over these same years he also read the New Testament daily in Latin, Greek and French, as well as English.[54]

In the decades before the Civil War an increasing number of American students crossed the Atlantic to take up advanced study of Scripture in England, France and especially Germany.[55] This transatlantic intellectual traffic greatly increased American awareness of cutting-edge biblical scholarship, even as some transcendentalists, such as Theodore Parker of Boston, came to accept radical conclusions about the human origin of Scripture. But most of the United States' leading scholars, including those who pursued advanced training in Europe, maintained traditional views. The Harvard Unitarian Andrews Norton used European learning to defend his account of the Bible's divine origins and its record of supernatural events. Moses Stuart of Andover Seminary, the era's pioneering mediator of German scholarship, pursued his studies in order to enhance his understanding of Scripture as a revelation from God.

As late as the 1870s most American students of Scripture continued to believe that the Bible recorded the infallible words of God. After a brief flurry of efforts to align a literal reading of early Genesis with new geological studies, American opinion in almost all camps did accept the need to reinterpret ancient biblical cosmologies in the light of modern science. Otherwise, it was still widely assumed that the Bible was true, and true in a commonsensical meaning of the term. This consensus began to erode during the last third of the century. European textual criticism and higher criticism called settled convictions into question. Some of the adjustments concerned issues of translation, for example the growing conviction among scholars that the KJV was based on inferior Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. Others dealt with larger questions and pointed to a new understanding of Scripture itself.

The entrance of these views coincided with a surge of academic professionalisation, highlighted in 1880 by the establishment of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL). About the same time older universities such as Harvard renovated their programmes to imitate Europe, and newer foundations such as Johns Hopkins adopted European procedures from the start. The new standards stressed science, professionalism, technical expertise and free inquiry. The new university professionals relied heavily on evolutionary conceptions of history. When applied to biblical texts, it was widely assumed that religious consciousness, as well as the shape of ancient texts, evolved over time.

[54] *Jefferson's Extracts from the Gospels: 'The Philosophy of Jesus' and 'The Life and Morals of Jesus'*, in Dickinson W. Adams (ed.), *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 2nd ser. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 60–105, 127–297.

[55] Brown, *The Rise of Biblical Criticism* remains the critical study for this period.

Scepticism about purported instances of the supernatural was a natural consequence. The general academic impetus was to accept the geologist's principle of uniformity when approaching Scripture: the religious experience of Jews and Christians could not be considered essentially different from those experienced in the present.

Yet very few American scholars accepted such views without qualifications in the decades before the First World War. The earliest public debates came rather over efforts to incorporate some elements of the new scholarship into more traditional beliefs. The first full discussion of these questions (and still one of the most thorough American debates on the critical study of Scripture in American history) took place in the pages of the *Presbyterian Review* from 1881 through 1883. Charles Briggs of Union Seminary in New York led several others in arguing for cautious acceptance of the new criticism. For these liberal evangelicals the results of responsible scholarship did not overthrow the church's historical trust in Scripture. As they reviewed with measured appreciation the works of Julius Wellhausen and Franz Delitzsch on the Pentateuch they concluded that, where the new criticism did not rule out the possibility of the miraculous, it could be used fruitfully since, as Briggs put it, 'theories of text and author, date, style, and integrity of writings' cannot establish or undercut the more general confidence in the Bible.[56]

Conservatives, led by A. A. Hodge of Princeton Seminary and B. B. Warfield, then at Western Seminary in Pennsylvania, begged to differ They held that the newer critical views compromised the integrity of a divinely inspired Bible. The Scripture's own account of itself could still be shown to be true, if only readers would abandon the prejudices of modern scholarship. In the words of Hodge and Warfield, 'the Scriptures not only contain, but ARE, THE WORD OF GOD, and hence … all their elements and all their affirmations are absolutely errorless and binding the faith and obedience of men'.[57]

The debate between the two camps was sharp, wide-ranging and decisive. In the short term the more conservative side prevailed, and Briggs, Henry Preserved Smith and a few other prominent seminary professors who shared their views were forced out of the northern Presbyterian church. In the long term the Briggs position won out, and the more conservative Warfield position was left to be defended in small denominations that splintered off from the larger northern and southern Presbyterian churches.

[56] Charles Briggs, 'Critical Theories of the Sacred Scriptures in Relation to their Inspiration', *Presbyterian Review* 2 (1881), pp. 550–79 at p. 555.
[57] Hodge and Warfield, 'Inspiration', p. 237.

By 1930 biblical studies inhabited a fragmented field. The division between scholars and non-scholars was growing stronger. An even stronger divide existed between traditional notions of divine revelation and more evolutionary understanding of sacred texts. Advocates of both positions thought of themselves as truly scientific, while each thought that the other had sacrificed science to ideology. During the middle third of the century, specialised literature from university presses and professional journals came, with a few exceptions, to be dominated by modern critical views. In its higher reaches this scholarship displayed broad historical learning, it mastered form and redaction criticisms as these criticisms had been developed in Europe, and it incorporated a wide range of advanced philological and archaeological learning.[58]

An important stimulation to modern biblical scholarship has also come from the participation of Catholic scholars. After the Second Vatican Council (1962–5) members of the Catholic Biblical Association began to be active more generally in the academy. The first formal exchange between this organisation and the SBL took place in 1956. By 1966 a Catholic was elected president of the SBL.

Since mid-century critical biblical scholarship has been pushed in multiple directions. Under the influence of European neo-orthodoxy, a biblical theology movement seasoned liberal views with a strong emphasis on the organic unity of Scripture and the need for the Bible to speak with its own authority. Brevard Childs of Yale University, who was an early participant in this movement, later subjected it to criticism in an important study from 1970, *Biblical Theology in Crisis*. This volume also anticipated Childs's own 'canon criticism', which gained adherents through a stress on understanding biblical writings on their own terms as transmitted by and through the historical churches in their canonical form.

More radical proposals also proliferated during the last decades of the twentieth century. The rise of feminism stimulated an immense quantity of new interpretations, which ranged from attacks on the Bible as a misogynist text to conservative investigations contextualising the scriptural patriarchy that feminists critiqued. African Americans drew on a long history of biblical engagement to propound themes of social and spiritual emancipation. From

[58] See the retrospectives sponsored by the SBL: D. A. Knight and G. M. Tucker (eds.), *The Hebrew Bible and its Modern Interpreters* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985); R. A. Kraft and G. W. E. Nickelsburg (eds.), *Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); and E. J. Epp and G. W. MacRae (eds.), *The New Testament and its Modern Interpreters* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

Latin America liberationist theology, with its identification of Jesus and the Hebrew prophets as advocates for the oppressed, exerted a special influence on American Catholic biblical study.

Then, in the early years of the twenty-first century, the much-noticed success of Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* popularised alternatives to mainstream scholarship that identified Gnostic texts and other alternative writings from the early Christian centuries as deserving the same attention as that reserved historically for the canonical books. Publishers' efforts to recruit well-certified professionals who could either explore the scholarship supposedly lying behind the novel or refute it altogether led to an avalanche of books. In this flurry, enthusiasm for alternative sources of early Christian understanding ran ahead of settled scholarly opinion.

From the conservative reaches of the landscape there were also new developments. Study of Scripture that has no use for modern criticism has grown rapidly in almost all parts of North America and among many groupings of Christians (and now also Muslims). The more general conservative turn in religion has been accompanied by a plethora of publications serving those who reject the academic conventions of the modern university. The creation of universities by leading television evangelists, the growth in public prominence of 'creation science' and an immense flow of literature from anti-modernist publishers testified to the ability of theological conservatives to maintain their own standards of biblical interpretation in opposition to the conventions of the academy.

Less driven by populist currents and more attuned to standard scholarly procedure is a growing number of moderate to conservative Bible scholars. They are drawn from self-styled evangelicals; from moderate and conservative wings of Methodist, Reformed, Lutheran and Catholic churches; from increasing numbers of Pentecostals and Seventh-day Adventists; and even from Mormons. Such scholarship is conservative in continuing to believe in the divine character of Scripture and in questioning some conventions of modern biblical criticism. But it also shares with contemporary criticism the conviction that modern historical research, modern textual study and modern philosophical self-awareness can help to understand the Bible better. Representatives of these convictions began returning to university post-graduate institutions in the 1930s. Soon they were establishing their own academic institutions, publishing commentary series and producing translations. A major boost to their work came from Great Britain where from the 1930s academics relatively conservative on issues of biblical scholarship gained positions in the universities, sponsored graduate students (often from the USA

and Canada) and paved the way for more fruitful interaction with the broad range of biblical scholars.[59]

Bible scholarship in the United States remains poised between a vast Bible-reading public and a much smaller, but also much more professional, academy. Together, moderate critics who value the importance of open channels between academy and popular venues – and also moderate conservatives who value the importance of open channels between church and academy – have established a lively marketplace of technical, scholarly and theological exchange. This particular exchange, like so many aspects of the Bible in America, is both sustained and threatened by the continuing broad appeal of Scripture for so many Americans from so many religious perspectives.

Canada

The broad cultural heritage that Canada shares with the United States means that much of the history of the Bible north of the border closely resembles the history to the south. But there are significant differences as well.[60] Most importantly, the presence of Roman Catholicism as a constitutive element in Canadian history from the first settlements means that the Canadian use of Scripture never simply duplicates the American. In addition, the differences separating the English-language cultures of Canada from those in the United States also created an alternative context for Scripture. As summarised by Seymour Margin Lipset, one of the shrewdest students of the two nations, Canada 'has been and is a more class-aware, elitist, law-abiding, statist, collectivity-oriented, and ... group-oriented society than the United States'.[61] With such general differences in view, the nationalistic use of Scripture in nineteenth-century Quebec and the interpretation of the Bible in the Canadian Presbyterian Church offer instructive counterpoints to what occurred in the United States.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, as American Protestants rang the changes on the theme of the United States as a chosen nation, so

[59] Important examples include J. B. Green, S. McKnight and I. H. Marshall (eds.), *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992); T. D. Alexander and D. W. Baker (eds.), *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003); and K. J. Vanhoozer, C. G. Bartholomew, D. J. Treier and N. T. Wright (eds.), *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005.

[60] The best general study is Jones, *A Highly Favored Nation*.

[61] Seymour Martin Lipset, *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 8.

too did some Quebec Catholic leaders for their own country. These Catholic Québécois knew very well that many in the United States looked upon their nation as a biblical creation, but they were not at all impressed with this American conceit. The view, as a modern scholar has summarised it, that 'la "France américaine" n'est rien de moins que le nouvel Israël de Dieu', was promoted for the better part of fifty years by a number of prominent clerics and provincial authorities.[62] Their number included Antoine Labelle (1833–91), priest of Saint-Jérôme in the diocese of Montreal and a fervent advocate of Quebec rural and industrial development; and Monsignor Louis-Adolphe Paquet, who in 1902 delivered a memorable address to the Société-Jean Baptiste in which he applied Isaiah 43:21 ('This people have I found for myself; they shall shew forth my praise') to the French Canadians.[63] Especially prominent in promoting a providential history of Quebec was the third bishop of Trois-Rivièrs, Louis-François Laflèche (1818–98), who in 1865 and 1866 published a series of thirty-four articles that were then collected as a book entitled *Some Considerations on the Connections between Civil Society and Religion and the Family*.

For Laflèche, Scripture supported his conviction that 'our mission and our national destiny are the work of native missions and the extension of the Kingdom of God by the formation of a Catholic people in the Valley of the St. Lawrence'.[64] In making these arguments Laflèche ranged far and wide in Holy Scripture; he was as rhetorically, evocatively and politically biblical as any contemporary from the United States, and he was much more self-consciously theological. In this public use of the Bible he hoped to provide not only an inspiring vision for Quebec nationalism, but also a practical antidote against what he considered the gravest threat to Quebec society. That threat he called 'la fièvre de l'émigration' to the United States.[65] Biblical history as well as secular history taught Laflèche that God blessed or judged nations depending on how they fulfilled the mission given by God. In his understanding, the exemplary record of the founders and early martyrs of French Canada had verified the sacredness of Quebec's destiny. From this perspective, Laflèche then urged his readers to do their duty by not emigrating to the United States, as well as by supporting God-given authorities in family, government and church.

[62] Gabriel Dussault, *Le Curé Labelle: messianisme, utopie et colonization au Québec 1850–1900* (Montreal: Hurtubise HMH, 1983), p. 61.
[63] Jones, *A Highly Favored Nation*, pp. 162–3.
[64] Louis-François Laflèche, *Quelques considérations sur les rapports de la société civile avec la religion et la famille* (Saint-Jacques, Quebec: Editions du Pot de Fer, 1991 [1866]), p. 71.
[65] Laflèche, *Considérations*, p. 25.

Laflèche was a master in using the Bible evocatively, and also in salting what he wrote with a persistent biblical rhetoric shaped by both the Latin Vulgate and the authorised French Catholic translation of the Bible. Writing as an old man he clinched an appeal to French Canadian immigrants who were trying to maintain their language and religion in the USA with a deft evocation of the Apostle Paul from Romans 8:31 – if a people remained faithful to God, then God would protect that people: 'and if God is for us, who can stand against us?'[66]

Serious internalising of biblical narratives and themes has always been a multinational phenomenon. The conclusion that the Bible speaks directly to an individual nation's political history is also far from rare, with Poland, Ireland, South Africa, Russia and several other nations joining both Quebec and the United States as societies where such interpretations have flourished.

The story for the place of the Bible among Canadian Presbyterians is also marked by strong parallels, but, again, also significant contrasts with the United States.[67] In Canada, Presbyterian engagement with Scripture has featured the same landmarks as in the United States, only less so. At least three factors have kept Canadian Presbyterian debate on Scripture more restrained than in the United States. First, Canadian Presbyterianism remained closely tied to the fortunes of the Scottish Kirk well into the twentieth century. This connection meant that the views of Canadian Presbyterians on Scripture continued to be shaped by events in Scotland. When the Disruption of the Scottish Kirk took place in 1843 it caused barely a ripple in the United States, but ended with an echoing schism in Canada. When Scotland debated the critical views of William Robertson Smith in the 1870s, Canadian Presbyterians hung on the extended give and take of that long crisis, while Americans paid only passing attention.

Second, the larger role for tradition in Canadian life meant that questions about biblical authority have not moved laity and clerics to the same pitch of contention as in the United States, where questions about the authority of Scripture have always figured prominently in defining the life of the church. Third, Presbyterian debates in Canada over church union threw other issues into the shade. Contention over joining the United Church of Canada, which was established in 1925, forced attention to issues concerning what it meant to be a Presbyterian more generally rather than to narrower issues concerning

[66] 'Lettre de Mgr. Laflèche' (18 February 1886), in H.-J.-J.-B. Chouinard (ed.), *Fête nationale des Canadiens-Français célébrée a Québec 1881–1889* (Quebec: Belleau, 1890), p. 96.

[67] Important surveys are John S. Moir, *Enduring Witness: A History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada*, rev. edn. (Toronto: Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1987) and Moir, *A History of Biblical Studies in Canada*.

biblical interpretation. Both for Presbyterians who joined the United Church and for those who remained in the continuing Presbyterian Church, ecclesiastical union and its effects, rather than Scripture per se, was the centre of church debate.

In this Canadian context, leading Presbyterians, although their views on Scripture may have closely resembled those of leading Americans, were never identified so closely with carefully defined positions on the Bible as were leading Americans. George Monro Grant, for example, the most influential figure among central Canadian Presbyterians during his tenure as principal of Queen's College (1877–1905), held moderate views on the Bible resembling those of Charles Briggs, but he was known much more for the Christocentricism of his evangelism and his ethics than for his views on the Bible. In a similar fashion, W. W. Bryden, who exerted considerable influence from his post at Knox College, Toronto, from 1927 to 1952, embraced a largely neo-orthodox view of the Bible, but he was recognised more for his role in quickening a sense of Presbyterian confessionalism in the trying days after the schism over church union than he was for his explicitly biblical opinions.

The spectrum of biblical views among Canadian Presbyterians has probably been somewhat narrower than that among American Presbyterians. Conservatives have been held close to a moderate centre by influences from Scotland, and then later from connections with Britain's InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Liberal evangelicals have been pushed towards the moderate centre by similar influences from Scotland and then by the conservative kind of neo-orthodoxy that came to prevail in Canada. And both confessionalists and liberal evangelicals have lived in a church preoccupied by a theological agenda defined more by questions not directly touching Scripture – for instance, Scottish inheritance and the needs of Canada – than was the case in the United States.

As with the scriptural basis of nineteenth-century Quebec nationalism, the appropriation of the Bible by Canadian Presbyterians charts its own story, even in the great shadow of American influence. Further investigation of parallel themes, histories and denominations would reveal more of the same similarities and significant differences.

Conclusion

Over the centuries, much has changed in the attention that North Americans pay to Scripture, the place they accord it in their lives, and the editions of the text that are available when they put it to use. Even more has changed in the cultural environments where Scripture, though never the only force, was

once clearly dominant. The linguistic and narrative place that for more than two centuries had been occupied by the KJV has now been replaced by the omnipresent electronic media. Bible-based materials – including movies such as Mel Gibson's *Passion* and the *Jesus Film* from Campus Crusade for Christ, or a number of successful children's adaptations of Bible stories such as *Veggie Tales* – do quite well in this new electronic marketplace. But the subjects that have been most successfully popularised by television, films and the Internet – which constitute the driving engines of ideas and images in modern culture – are sport, crime, pornography, political battles, warfare, modern medicine and the media itself. In treating these subjects there is minimal place for biblical themes, much less the specific language of any one biblical version.

Yet as still another strike against the now tattered remnants of once-regnant secularisation theory, North Americans in very large numbers continue to buy, read and defer to the Bible. Survey numbers probably overestimate such matters, but they are still impressive. A Gallup poll from January 2005 found that 95 per cent of American regular church attenders (89 per cent in Canada) and 69 per cent of the total American population (56 per cent for Canada) expressed their agreement with one of the two conservative opinions on offer: 'the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word'; or 'the Bible is the inspired word of God but not everything in it should be taken literally'.[68] In 2000 14 per cent of Americans told Gallup pollsters that they were participating in a Bible-study group.[69] In 2006 the Barna Group reported that its surveys found 47 per cent of the American population reporting that they read the Bible at least once a week, a figure that had risen from 36 per cent in 1988.[70]

Making sense of such numbers, as also of the long history of Bible usage lying behind them, is not a simple task. The North American story of the Bible reflects the dominant place of Scripture in the Christian churches and Jewish communities; it illustrates the power of democratic practice to shape the use of sacred texts, and it is influenced almost as much by political, economic and racial realities as by religion. Because the Bible has been so important for North American religious communities, it has been central to North American history in general. But because North American history in general has so powerfully shaped its religious communities, that broader history also defines what the Bible has meant through the centuries in North America.

[68] The Gallup Poll Tuesday Briefing (January 2005), p. 96.
[69] George Gallup, Jr., *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 2000* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2001), p. 349.
[70] Reported in Crosby, 'Not your Mother's Bible', p. 29.

22

The Bible in Latin America

NÉSTOR MÍGUEZ AND DANIEL BRUNO

End of the colonial period

In the second half of the eighteenth century the colonial control that Spain had exercised since the conquest, in what is today known as Latin America, was shaken by what was probably the largest indigenous rebellion in the continent. This was the uprising led by José Gabriel Condorcanqui, a maternal descendant (great-great-great-grandchild) of the last Inca, who adopted the name Tupac Amaru II. The repercussions of this revolt spread from Colombia to River Plate and can be understood as one of the most important events in the future independence of the continent. Such was the case that liberators José de San Martín and Manuel Belgrano, in the drafting of the Declaration of Independence of the Viceroyalty of River Plate, proposed that the new government be formed as a constitutional monarchy under the last descendant of Tupac Amaru, Juan Bautista Tupac Amaru, who at that time (1816) lived in Buenos Aires.

José Gabriel Tupac Amaru completed his studies at the Francis Borgia Jesuit School, an institution especially devoted to training the children of local indigenous chiefs in Cuzco whose curriculum included the biblical narrative as a part of its teaching. At twenty-two years of age, he demanded that his possessions be returned to him and his royal honours restored, along with the title 'Inca', formalising his demands through legal and pacific channels. However, upon realising that such actions were leading nowhere and that the alternative would end in brutality and extortion at the hands of the governing Spanish, he initiated a rebellion that would bring together more than a hundred thousand combatants. In 1781 he was finally defeated and executed along with his family, in a cruel and sadistic manner, as decreed by Judge Benito de la Mata Linares.

All things considered, his rebellion was not a religious fight to restore ancient Incan traditions (valued as these were by his countrymen) but rather for economic – his main complaint concerned tax abuses – and political

independence. While he always remained loyal to Catholic doctrine, he accused chief magistrates of discrediting the Christian faith and its practices. Although the Roman Catholic Church was one of his main opponents and was instrumental in his defeat, it was not the enemy. On the contrary, in a letter to Bishop Moscoso he writes: 'Your Excellency, do not let this news upset or disturb your Christian fervour. Neither the peace of the monasteries, whose holy virgins and immunity will in no way be desecrated, nor will their priests be troubled or caused the slightest offence by those who follow me.' Bishop Moscoso was initially tolerant of Tupac, given that he too had been at odds with the governing powers and the demands made by Tupac worked in his favour politically. However, it would later be he who, when the rebellion became increasingly active and indigenous demands more specific, would excommunicate the Inca and his followers.

It is quite likely that his time spent with the Jesuits heavily influenced Tupac's way of appreciating the Christian faith, bearing in mind the popularity in America of theories such as those of the Jesuit Francisco Suárez concerning self-government. In his Bible classes he had also heard the story of Moses saving his people from slavery imposed by the Egyptians. In his statements he often identifies the tyranny of the chief magistrates with that of the Egyptian Pharaoh. However, in his statements before Judge Mata Linares he explicitly demonstrates such knowledge and appeals to the biblical text: 'being a descendant of the Incas and seeing his countrymen distressed, ill-treated and persecuted, he believed in the obligation to defend them, to see if he could lift them from the oppression in which they found themselves'. Words such as these are almost literally reminiscent of Moses' reasoning when he decides to save his people from an Egyptian despot and also when he remembers that

> a humble youth with a stick and slingshot and a coarse shepherd freed the downtrodden people of Israel from the power of Goliath and Pharaoh: that was the reason why the tears of those poor captives lent compassion to such voices, pleading for justice from heaven, which in a few short years would be released from their agony and torment to reach the promised land. In the end, they reached their goal, although through weeping and tears. But us, wretched Indians, with more sighs and tears than them, in so many centuries, have not been able to find any relief; and although the true glory and sovereignty of our monarch has deigned to free us with his royal seal, such relief and weariness has brought us greater restlessness, earthly and spiritual ruin. This must be the reason the Pharaoh that persecutes, mistreats and harasses us is not just one alone, but many, that show us such cruelty and depravity as is the case of the crown officials, their lieutenants, collectors and bailiffs: men so perverse and wicked … that to justify their acts would be to sanctify

> them . . . the Neros and Attilas whose wickedness is remembered in history. . . . In their case, there can be pardon because, ultimately, they were infidels; however the crown officials, having been baptised, are unworthy of Christianity with their behaviour and appear to be more atheist, Calvinist or Lutheran because they are enemies of God and men, worshippers of silver and gold. I can find no other reason for such cruel behaviour other than the majority of them being poor and from very modest upbringings.[1]

This part of Tupac Amaru's speech reflects elements of the biblical training he had received from the Jesuits. Once again in Latin American history the Bible is recognised as a message, in opposition to the notion of the Bible as a religious artefact and symbol of the authority of its presumed 'authorised interpreters': colonial and ecclesiastical authorities.

This demonstrates how the way in which Jesuits taught in their schools, adopting an approach that was not always servile towards the Crown, along with other circumstances of ecclesiastical politics both in America and Europe, made Jesuit behaviour suspicious to colonial authorities. In addition to such special schools for a select few from the most distinguished sectors of the indigenous community, the Jesuits stood out due to their defence of poor indigenous people in their evangelising missions, also established in areas that were not so tightly controlled. In the area of Iguazú (today Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil), they established towns and small cities where indigenous people were highly regarded and sheltered from the cruellest forms of oppression. In these settlements the acquisition of trades and crafts was promoted and encouraged, as well as reading, writing and evangelisation, treating the local indigenous population quite favourably and intervening between them and the landowners who sought to enslave them. This provoked numerous clashes with local government authorities, particularly due to the action of slave hunters in the area dominated by Portugal, the *bandeirantes*. The Jesuits provided Christian instruction to the indigenous population in their care, and we have some of the catechisms they used. However, this did not include the teaching of Scripture as such, in that there are no adapted versions or booklets based on biblical texts, as can be seen later with the arrival of Protestant missions. There are no Bible texts or lectionaries among their catechisms, but rather only occasional references to Bible verses or liturgical texts. Their confrontations with landowners, slave hunters and the distrust of viceroys and other local crown officials resulted in the expulsion of the order from the American territories

[1] The complete collection of Benito de la Mata Linares' documents can be found in the Spanish Royal Academy of History.

in 1776. This incident and the revolt of Condorcanqui are understood as two of the most important events leading to the wars of emancipation that would take place at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Latin American period of emancipation: social Romanticism (1804–70)

At the end of the colonial period, in particular with the advent of the Bourbons in Spain, things began to change. Spanish intellectuals were receptive to concepts from the Enlightenment and the Encyclopaedia of Diderot. Spain began to train architects, engineers, geographers and naturalists. Later, the democratic ideas engendered by the French Revolution would reach Spain, although they would not be adopted by its governing political classes. In America the dominating colonial structure had been weakened. Colonial disintegration was preceded by years of penetration of new ideas coming from an enlightened and liberal Europe. The emancipatory feats in Latin America, strictly speaking, were belated secular movements from the bourgeois revolutionary explosions at the end of the eighteenth century both in the United States and in Europe, in particular France.

The same church that had promoted patronage, in order to use the power of the Crown for its own benefit, had now been turned on, losing the favour of the Crown completely. It no longer had direct control over the bishops of the colonies except through a Crown administration that was excessively permissive and distracted. In this context, secular clergy in America were now able to share new Enlightenment ideology. Although the pure Enlightenment tradition of French encyclopaedic rationalism and Rousseau's *Social Contract* were too radical to penetrate Catholic ranks, what did make the greatest impact was the influence of Spanish 'Catholic liberalism', which had a strong presence in the region. The influence of the liberal constitution of Cádiz (1812) – a liberal moderate constitution – is particularly significant within this Spanish liberal presence, as a source of privileged consultation, along with the United States Constitution in 1776, for the drawing up of various Latin American constitutions. The influence of Hispanic liberalism can be appreciated in the considerable number of clergymen who participated in revolutionary processes in Latin America, particularly the Creole secular clergy who were decidedly committed to such movements. In Argentina the contributions of Dean Gregorio Funes, Juan Ignacio Gorriti, Mariano Medrano, Pedro Ignacio Castro Barros, Brother Justo Santamaría de Oro, Pedro de Uriarte and Pedro León Gallo are especially noteworthy. In Mexico there were also many

clergymen involved in struggles for independence such as Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, José María Morelos, Brother Servando Teresa de Mier, Miguel Ramos Arizpe, José María Becerra and José María Luis Mora. In New Granada (Colombia and Venezuela) Brother Domingo Belisario Gómez and in Peru Rodríguez de Mendoza, Jerónimo Espinoza and Diego Aliaga also stand out. All of them, priests and brothers, inherited rationalist Enlightenment ideals that, in Latin America, were presented in different forms throughout the nineteenth century.

One of the benefits of this new historical development was the fact that, in the new republics, the prohibition on reading versions of the Bible other than the Vulgate authorised by the king had never taken effect. In fact, during the period of the Inquisition any Bible in the vernacular was condemned and prohibited. There were very strict rules regarding the use of Bible translations, which could be read only by the 'wise and pious', who had received written permission from a bishop or inquisitor.[2] The removal of this prohibition, tolerance towards the presence of Protestant travellers who were allowed to share their ideas, and the usefulness they represented for the revolutionary cause in America were all without a doubt determining factors in the Bible becoming a central reference point during that period.

Essentially, priests, militia, journalists, writers, freethinkers, Freemasons and Protestants were gradually forming a libertarian bloc, sharing the same rationalist Enlightenment thinking and united in a political alliance. Moreover, an alliance between revolutionary clergy and deistic groups was also being formed into what, at that early stage, could be seen as a form of Catholic Freemasonry, heavily influenced by the Cádiz Lodge. Many of these networks, societies of ideas and interests provided the foundation and logistical support for the beginning of the distribution of Bibles in Latin America.

The Latin American Romantic generation saw the Bible as a source of new morals and an instrument of progress, as Domingo F. Sarmiento states:

> When the rebirth of the sciences, after centuries of barbarity, expanded the sphere of action of intelligence on earth, the publication of the Bible was the first attempt at printing; the reading of the Bible laid the foundations of popular education, which has changed the face of nations that have access to it; and ultimately, with the Bible in hand, and because of the Bible, the primitive book, the father of all books, English immigrants came to America to build up in the north of our continent the most powerful States in the world, because they are free.

[2] For more on this and other themes regarding the history of the presence of the Bible in colonial Hispanic–Portuguese America see our chapter in volume 3 of this work.

What Bibles then were available in the Spanish language? Besides the prohibited translation by Casiodoro de Reina, later revised and re-edited by Cipriano de Valera (the 'Holy Bible', Reina-Valera version, today still the most widely used Bible in the Latin American Evangelical world), dominant Roman Catholicism made available the version by Felipe Scío de San Miguel. It was a translation based on the Vulgate and was the first Spanish-language Bible printed in Spain. The author was the bishop of Segovia and it was published in 1793 (although there was a previous version that contained only the New Testament). Bible societies produced some editions of the Spanish text and colporteurs distributed this version throughout Latin America.

There was also a version produced by the bishop of Barcelona, Félix Torres Amat, in 1824. This version included inserted notes in defence of Catholicism and was the most widely used version for over a century. Finally, there was another version, developed from the French text by Abbot Vencé, compiled by a group of Mexican priests, directed by Abbot Mariano Galván Rivera. It was the first Spanish-language Bible made and printed in America. The work was published in twenty-six volumes between 1831 and 1833.

It is during this period between the Enlightenment and the beginning of Latin American Romanticism, in which the most fruitful and unprejudiced encounters between the few Protestants present in the region and some of the libertarian priests, writers and politicians took place. The links many of them maintained with a still-embryonic Protestantism in the region had the objective of clearing people's consciences of the 'obscurantism' that impeded them from drawing closer to God directly, carrying the light of the Enlightenment, cutting through the foliage of ignorance, bringing awareness to counter the dulling brought about by the mixture of religious concepts with superstitious practices. For this reason, Protestantism quickly became an ally of the liberal bloc.

The struggle against the church patronised by landowners loyal to the Crown embraced innovative strategies. It is in this way that the presence of the Bible in Spanish, brought for the first time by British colporteurs to Buenos Aires in 1806, as we will later see, was welcomed by this bloc and embraced as a new weapon against reactionary clerical hegemony. The Bible was able to position itself not only within a channel of direct understanding to the sources of Christianity, thus taking away the centralising power that the church enjoyed through its role as *mother and teacher*, but it was also a suitable tool, used by the liberal bloc as a channel to educate the masses, countering the elite education provided by the clergy throughout the region up until then.

In this way, the historical moment of self-determination experienced by Latin America was undoubtedly a magnificent opportunity to allow the organised development of the distribution of the Bible throughout the continent.

There were a number of disparate attempts at Spanish and Portuguese Bible distribution, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as Sydney Rooy affirms:

> The first 600 copies of the Bible in Spanish, sent by the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), reached Buenos Aires and Montevideo in 1806. Between 1804 and 1807, the Society printed 20,000 copies of the New Testament in Portuguese, which sailors and merchants distributed along the coast of Brazil. Quakers brought Bibles to Antigua and other islands from 1808 for soldiers, sailors and the infirm. Between 1808 and 1816, 4,000 Bibles were distributed in the West Indies, Honduras and the Guianas and 11,500 copies of the New Testament in Spanish, French, English and Dutch. Merchants, travellers and pious ship captains also distributed copies of the sacred text along the coasts of Latin America.[3]

However, the decisive contribution to the task of coordinated and systematic promotion and distribution of the Holy Scriptures in Spanish was made by James (Hispanicised as Diego) Thomson, from 1818. Thomson was not only a colporteur, dedicated to the distribution of the Bible, but first and foremost one of most prominent representatives of the Lancaster education method. In this role Thomson was able to combine his two dominating passions that had brought him to the coasts of the River Plate in December 1818: education through Bible study.

The Lancaster teaching method had been one of the key strategies for the dissemination and consolidation of democratic revolutionary ideals in Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century. It was a method that, for the first time, considered primary-level education a right for all and not only those who could afford it. In 1798 Joseph Lancaster founded a school in Southwark, a poor neighbourhood in London. There, using Andrew Bell's previous experiences of mutual teaching, he applied a method of education in which older and more advanced students, called 'monitors', taught their fellow students under the supervision of a teacher. Because of this he was able to enrol more than a thousand poor children. In addition to guaranteeing education for all, this system avoided the need for large budgets to undertake the task, given that the availability of monitors ensured a free and efficient way to double efforts.

[3] Rooy, 'La misión'.

The Lancaster method was widely adopted and spread throughout Latin America by revolutionary leaders at the time. Simón Bolívar invited Lancaster to Venezuela, promising him help and protection. Lancaster moved to Caracas and from there worked with his method both in Venezuela and Colombia.

In the southern half of the continent, Thomson who, like Lancaster, had been invited by revolutionary leaders to spread the method throughout the region represented the method. In Chile, under the protection of Bernardo O'Higgins, he developed the method and founded schools both in Santiago and Mendoza (Argentina), where he founded the Lancaster Society (1821). In Peru he also worked for the Lancaster school foundation under the tutelage of José de San Martín and Bernardo de Monteagudo. In Buenos Aires, from 1818 to 1821, he founded seven schools at the request of the city council, in addition to another in Montevideo (Uruguay).

What made Thomson a great promoter of the Bible was the practice introduced in his teaching method. Lacking suitable reading material, he began to edit selections of Bible texts to be used as reading passages for children. His reports reflected optimism, albeit short-lived:

> The government has charged me with the establishment of schools in this city [Buenos Aires] and its surrounding areas . . . I hope to see thousands reap the benefits from such education and be imbued with the healthiest principles of religion and morality through these readings extracted from the Holy Scriptures. . . . It will surprise and please you to know that I have total freedom in choosing these excerpts and they are printed here. . . . Where the Word of God circulates, we have good reason to hope for good fruits.[4]

In every Latin American country where Thomson founded his schools, the Bible was the foundation text for teaching students to read, either edited into short selected texts or directly from the New Testament, as happened in Lima, according to Thomson himself:

> Some time ago, I said I hoped to openly introduce the New Testament in our schools. Blessed be the Lord because our goal has been reached! I have publicly sold a number of copies to children at the school. I often ask students to find the passage we are talking about in the New Testament so that they bring it to school the following day duly indicated.[5]

From 1826 onwards Thomson was hired by the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) to work as its representative in Ecuador, Mexico, the Caribbean

[4] Letters by Thomson, cited in Monti, *La preocupación religiosa*, p. 84.
[5] Letters by Thomson, cited in Monti, *La preocupación religiosa*, p. 85.

and islands still under British rule. In this way the dissemination of the Scriptures continued to spread, covering the entire area of Latin America and the Caribbean. The joint work of the BFBS and the American Bible Society (ABS) was key in the dissemination of the Bible throughout the continent. As Sydney Rooy states, records from both institutions show that in those early years the work of dissemination had already begun in fifteen countries by the BFBS and in ten by the ABS.

In turn, Daniel Parrish Kidder, a Methodist missionary, arrived in Rio de Janeiro in 1837 as an ABS representative, along with Justin Saulding. Both embarked on an efficient and vigorous dissemination of the Bible. Many others followed, paving the way for the arrival of missionary denominations. In Brazil the atmosphere was different from that of the rest of Hispanic America with respect to how the Bible was received. A new Portuguese version by priest and historian Antônio Pereira Figueiredo was published in London in 1821. Emperor Pedro II (1840–89) was in favour of the distribution of the Scriptures from the beginning, stating: 'I love the Bible. I read it every day and the more I read it, the more I love it.' In 1879 a new edition of the New Testament was published by the Religious and Moral Literature Society of Buenos Aires. The complete Bible appeared in 1917.

Various efforts to bring the Bible to Latin American indigenous populations in their own languages in these early years should also be highlighted:

> On the request of Thomson, the American Bible Society (ABS) released five hundred dollars for the translation of the Bible into Quechua. In 1823, Thomson began this task, finishing at the end of the year with the help of 'four gentlemen' one of these a priest. They had already completed two gospels, the books of the Acts of the Apostles and the two epistles of Peter.[6]

The other translation was into Aymara and undertaken by the revolutionary Bolivian priest Vicente Pazos Silva, who often went by his indigenous maternal surname (Kanqui). With the help of the BFBS he completed the translation, first of the Gospel of Luke and later the entire New Testament and the Psalms. In 1829 a thousand editions were printed, accompanied by the Spanish text.[7]

Furthermore, four years prior to the liberation of slaves in the Caribbean, the Society published a bilingual edition (African [*sic*]–English) of the New Testament, which was assigned to Moravian missionaries in Suriname. Subsequent editions were produced until 1889.[8]

[6] Canclini, *Diego Thomson*, p. 89.
[7] Vareto, *Diego Thomson*, p. 76.
[8] Rooy, 'La misión'.

New obstacles to bible distribution

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century the receptive attitude towards Protestant presence and bible distribution suffered an abrupt change. The 'absolute freedom' Thomson enjoyed in the early years was increasingly curtailed. On the other hand, Protestant presence, linked primarily with the United States, began to be repelled in some regions of Latin America. There are two reasons that can explain such reactions: (a) Vatican foreign policy and (b) United States expansionist policy.

Vatican foreign policy

The tolerance and permissiveness shown by the church in the colonies up until this point would soon come to an end. After a period of extreme weakness on the part of the Spanish Crown in the face of pressure and the Napoleonic defeat of Madrid, Fernando VII returned to the throne with a reactionary and anti-liberal policy, drawing closer to Rome because of his own weakness. On 4 May 1814 Fernando decreed the Cádiz courts and their legislative function, essentially the liberal constitution of 1812, to be illegal. He re-established the Council of Castile, dismissed mayors, re-established the general captaincy, restored the Society of Jesus and revived the Inquisition.

Rome in turn took advantage of this moment of weakness and submission on the part of Fernando VII to retake control of the church in the colonies. The Vatican had relinquished control of the colonial church to the Crown through royal patronage; however, this was no longer necessary. Rome now needed to once again take control of the church, rigidly aligning it with papal policy. Thus, it was again able to assume, among other things, the right to appoint bishops and re-establish control over 'sound doctrine'. This policy change was, undoubtedly, welcomed by the most conservative among the Creole population and the colonial ecclesiastic hierarchy alike.

From 1830 onwards the task of bible distribution which Thomson enjoyed because 'I have complete freedom' – he said – 'to choose these lessons and they are printed here' began to encounter obstacles. In Mexico he had to abandon his duties as a number of dioceses had published edicts prohibiting the distribution of bibles in Spanish and without notes. Thousands of bibles were removed from bookshops or seized directly at customs. 'What I have to tell you this month is unfortunately not very encouraging. To begin with the worst, I must tell you that, at the present moment, the sale of the Scriptures here has almost entirely stopped,'[9] stated Thomson in his report to the BFBS.

[9] Canclini, *Diego Thomson*, p. 149.

From this moment on and after a number of comings and goings to and from Mexico, his luck did not improve.

On the other hand, in some Caribbean islands with Protestant colonising governments the task of distribution maintained an accelerated pace. This was also the case in countries such as Venezuela and Haiti. In Jamaica, Thomson was present on 1 August 1834 at the celebration of the emancipation of black slaves:

> The BFBS created a special fund to provide a copy of the Bible to every emancipated slave 'to help console him and the wrongs he had suffered'. At Christmas that same year, more than 100,000 copies of the New Testament and Psalms were sent with this intention. Between 1830 and 1837, a total of 60,000 copies of the Bible and New Testament were distributed. In spite of growing Catholic opposition in certain islands during the 1840s, new agents such as Joseph Wheeler (1835) and McMurray (1842) established three warehouses: Jamaica, Barbados and Antigua. In addition to the special shipment for freed slaves, between 1834 and 1854, 180,000 copies of the Scriptures were sent to the West Indies. In the same period, with the help of volunteers, almost 21,000 copies of the Scriptures in Spanish, Portuguese, German, Italian and French were taken to South and Central America.[10]

United States expansionist policy

In 1835 border tensions between Mexico and the United States, in relation to the dispute over Texas, created a hostile climate that lasted until 1846 when outright war broke out between the two countries. Two years later, the war was won by the United States which, as 'war compensation', appropriated the Mexican regions of Upper California and New Mexico, Texas having already opted to become a state, for the Washington government. This expansion into the Far West, through the new lands 'given by God', strengthened an old feeling in the United States of manifest destiny. In this context, Protestant presence, especially in Mexico, ran the risk of being identified with the expansionist enemy, and in many cases this was a reality. Some colporteurs and missionaries in Mexico and other regions of Latin America acted as ideological agents in support of the US expansionist policy. The large demand for bibles, for soldiers and inhabitants of territories annexed by the United States, was met by ABS's agents present in these regions.

While the majority of Bible representatives and missionaries carried out their duties in an honest and respectful way towards the Latin American population, it became, from that moment on, very difficult not to suspect everyone.

[10] Rooy, 'La misión'.

This feeling of suspicion and distrust was used and taken advantage of by the Catholic Church to make all forms of Protestantism appear, among other things, to be an agent of imperialist America.

The image of the Bible was once again linked to situations of conquest and theological justifications of unjust appropriation. This undoubtedly had an enormous effect on the work of spreading the Word of God in vast regions of Latin America for many years. However, in spite of such concrete obstacles to distribution, the Bible continued to be a valid model for the Latin American educated classes committed to reform and progress.

The liberal–Romantic ideals of the first half of the nineteenth century constructed the great tale of modern progress that collided with the old colonial model with respect to its political, ideological and economic attitudes. Latin American Romanticism at the time spoke of human dignity and freedom, national identity, Indianism and Negritude, preferring historical and social-cultural themes. Romantic writers had a great awareness of the surrounding reality and the social role of literature. It is for this reason that the Bible assumed a superior position for this generation as a literary and aesthetic work and also a source of historical and ethical commitment.

However, Latin American liberalism would soon enter a period of change, gradually transforming as its existence was increasingly linked to overseas influences, commercial port activity, free trade and, above all, the idea of scientific progress stemming from European positivism. This new stage would demonstrate a growing complexity to which Romanticism, with its simple linearity, would not be in any position to provide answers. The Romantic vision of the Bible could not be sustained for much longer and challenging times lay ahead.

Positivist period and fundamentalist–integrationist reaction 1870–1930

Social Romanticism maintained its influence until the 1870s when it began to retreat due to pressure from scientific positivism. From the 1880s onwards an eclectic system of ideas began to come together: traces of social Romanticism in culture, along with free trade in the economy and materialist positivism in science. Politically speaking, the liberalism of the 1870s moved closer to and formed an alliance with the conservative oligarchy, giving rise to the creation of a 'progressive–conservative–elitist liberalism' that characterised the third phase in the development of liberal ideals in the twentieth century. Benito Juárez in Mexico and Domingo Sarmiento in Argentina were the main protagonists.

The rise to power of liberal governments in almost all Latin American countries marked the beginning of a period of definition and consolidation of a liberal project neatly aligned, either by conviction or circumstantial pressure, to national and foreign oligarchies. It was a period of notable growth and progress in science, technology and urbanisation. However, there were serious limitations to such liberalism's ability to bring real progress to countries in the region. The United States, in the midst of industrial expansion and with its political organisation re-established following the Civil War, now had its sights set on the expansion of its territories and markets. Latin American liberalism opened its markets, buying manufactured consumables, technology and knowledge while selling raw materials, particularly cattle and wheat in the south, specialised mining in the Andean region, as well as fruit and coffee in Brazil and the Caribbean.

Liberalism in Latin America did not in practice play the same democratising role as it had in Europe and North America.[11] While European liberalism established itself as a progressive force as a result of its powerful industrial development, Latin American liberalism, dependent on its landowning classes, soon became synonymous with conservatism. While European liberalism was revolutionary, in Latin America it was the new face of conservatism that would eventually re-establish its links with the Catholic Church.

Moreover, the third phase of liberalism in Latin America is distinct from the two previous stages in certain respects. While the Enlightenment and Romanticism emphasised ideas and moral historicism as the basis for political organisation, positivism became the ideology of conservative 'order'. In the name of rationalism based on experimental science, it opposed the Romantic irrationalism that had dominated the previous stage of national organisation. This provoked a rupture between the concept of 'progress' as a force for emancipation and national organisation and 'progress' as 'order in the face of barbarity' as a dominant idea of the conservative period in Latin America.

In this context and in relation to the Bible as a socio-cultural actor, we can identify three levels of behaviour.

[11] This can be explained in so far as liberals in Europe boasted a strong economic foundation based on powerful and growing industrialisation that generated a thriving middle class. In Latin America liberalism turned to its old opponents with connections to land and exports in order to consolidate its economic base. Being a liberal in Latin America was very different from being one in Europe at one point or the other in the commercial circuit. The free trade model and international division of labour that embodied this generation at the end of the nineteenth century forced the continent to hold back its industrialised base, thus paradoxically ignoring in practice democratising hypotheses, in order to concentrate wealth in sectors relating to land and imports.

The Catholicism–Protestantism controversy: the Bible as progress vs. Hispanic tradition

In the mid-nineteenth century, particularly from 1848 onwards with liberal revolutions in Europe, Latin America experienced an influx of romantic ideals from progressive liberalism. Benito Juárez in Mexico along with Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and Bartolomé Mitre in Argentina were the first Latin American exponents of the liberal–anti-clerical–pre-positivist ideology in power. In 1859 Juárez promulgated, with the support of the radical group, the so-called Reform Laws: state independence from church in addition to laws regarding civil marriage, civil registry, mausoleums and cemeteries and the transfer of goods from church to state. Julio Roca enacted the same reforms in Argentina in 1880, aiming to reduce the church's political influence.

The Catholic Church thus renewed its defensive/crusading posture. Pope Pius IX reacted to encroaching liberalism and gave new impetus to the ideological battle against modernism in a head-on attack, reinforcing papal authority through the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and of Papal Infallibility (1870). Meanwhile, the encyclicals *Quanta Cura* and *Syllabus* (1864) were the greatest exponents of the defensive policy of the church intended to regain land lost to the advance of anti-clerical liberalism. Protestantism of the time was clearly aligned with the liberal bloc, composed of Masonic lodges, freethinkers and liberal politicians in power. It is in this context that the confrontation between Latin American Protestants and Catholics, which above all would be ideological, political and cultural, rather than theological, came about.

The Catholicism–Protestantism controversy was not based on diversity of opinion regarding biblical or doctrinal interpretation, as would later occur in the intra-Protestant conflict between 'fundamentalism' and 'modernism'; rather, it was a massive questioning of the very existence of the religious expression of the other. Towards the end of the nineteenth century there was not enough room for two forms of Christian expression with such intolerance resulting in one rejecting the other: 'Protestants [in Latin America], in order to be consistent with their convictions, must seek a way to transform, purify or destroy Roman Catholicism,'[12] stated Bishop Neely, in relation to Methodist missionary work in South America.

The Protestant–Catholic controversy in Latin America was a power dispute for missionary territory: the weakening of the religious monopoly by

[12] Thomas Benjamin Neely, *South America: A Mission Field* (New York: Eaton & Manis, 1906), pp. 51–3.

the Catholic Church was quickly taken advantage of by North American missionary societies. While their European counterparts saw Latin America as an already Christian continent and directed their efforts towards China, India and Japan, American missionary organisations saw in Catholicism another form of paganism to be combated: 'South America has been cursed by a religion that blinds the intellect and soul with the chains of clerical authoritarianism and does nothing for the development of the mind of the spiritual power of its followers.'[13] Therefore, missionary territory should be fought for, inch by inch, because 'ignorance, superstition and immorality in these lands, where for hundreds of years Catholicism has had absolute validity, make clear the need for South America to be considered a mission territory for Protestants'.[14] This growing territorial desire should not only be understood in terms of evangelical zeal. The disputed 'missionary territory' happened to be superimposed on 'commercial territory' closely related to North American interests in the area.

The controversy was also a head-on collision between two opposing sociopolitical projects, one tied to land and colonial structure and the other connected to international trade, as we have already seen.

An important factor, used as a legitimising frame in the controversy, though not always explicitly stated, was the strong racist components that were revived in this dispute. From 1898, in the midst of the Hispanic–American war, after the United States had taken the last Spanish colonial possessions and the annexation of Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines, racial prejudices that had existed between Spain and England throughout centuries of dispute over Atlantic control once again came to light. Furthermore, the racial and cultural admiration that some Latin American liberals had for the United States inspired them to think of it as the ultimate social paradigm.

The growing myth of the manifest destiny of the Anglo-Saxon race in the United States would undoubtedly be one of the incentives for a large part of the missionary movement in the nineteenth century. One of the best-known Methodist missionaries in a number of Latin American countries, Thomas Wood, affirms:

> During the Reformation, the Latin race rejected the gospel. God in turn rejected them, stripping them of their former pre-eminence among the most refined in the land and he let them take their place in a lineage of descendants of Northern barbarians, to whom God first preached, then energised and

[13] Francis Clark, *The Gospel in Latin Lands* (New York: Macmillan, 1909), p. 239.
[14] Clark, *The Gospel in Latin Lands*, p. 240.

> multiplied and he blessed them among all other lineages, arming them with steel and steam and enlightening them to be the vanguard of all humanity. But God is now giving the Latin race another opportunity to accept the gospel and thus recuperate its birthright.[15]

On the other hand, Catholic nationalism in its distinct forms also expressed its adherence to the cult of pure lineage. Catholic fundamentalism from the beginning of the twentieth century traces its ideological foundations back to this context.

> I have racial sensitivity. I am Latino and I observe civilised barbarians in the North with an inherited sense of distrust. Every citizen in the Union can be likened to a shareholder placing an ideal of material perfection above that of moral perfection and equating civilisation with the triumph of industry and trade. However, as descendents from Latinos, educated by Greeks, we believe the most *civilised person to be he who is morally perfect . . . I am proud to say that I am bored of trains and chimneys*.[16]

Latin American intellectuals were also drawn into the dispute; among supporters of Latinophobe or pro–Anglo-Saxon narratives we find the writings of Domingo F. Sarmiento in *Conflict and Harmony of Races in America* (1883), *The Future of Latin American Nations* (1899) by Mexican writer Francisco Bulnes and *Our America* (1903) by the Argentinian Carlos Octavio Bunge. On the other hand, an anti-Americanism united different forms of expression such as the rediscovery of Greek and Latin spirituality as the basis for the defence and unity of Hispanic American culture. This can be seen in *Ariel* (1900) by the Uruguayan José Enrique Rodó, through criticism of 'imperial democracy' in *Our America* (1891) by the Cuban José Martí and the recognition of the foundational Latinisation of America in *Sick Continent* (1899) by the Venezuelan César Zumeta.

Thus, the Protestant–Catholic controversy in Latin America was clearly far from being an isolated theological issue, but was rather a catalyst for multiple interests and alliances. In this confrontation, which lasted until the mid-twentieth century, the Bible was reduced to a cultural commodity, a producer of symbolic feeling, connected to the liberal pro–Anglo-Saxon Protestant proposal, embodied in the narrative Bible–progress–democracy and confronted with the conservative proposal, embodied in the tradition–Hispanic Latinisation narrative.

[15] Thomas Wood, *South America as a Mission Field,* in *Protestant Missions in South America*, ed. Harlan P. Beach et al. (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1900), p. 213.

[16] Belisario Montero, 'De mi diario', *Ideas* 13 (1904), pp. 8–10.

Continuity in the task of bible distribution

In this context of Protestant missionary expansion, stimulated by anti-clerical controversy, Bible societies strengthened their presence and renewed their work of bible distribution. This action on the part of these societies, promoted by liberal governments, was branded not only as religious in nature but as also 'civilising'. The original alliance between Protestants and revolutionary governments in Latin America had rescued the libertarian value of the Bible, not only through spreading its message but also by the act itself of breaking with the monarchist church and reading the Scriptures. This alliance would now become stronger, but with a twist in its meaning: the value that the new elites needed to emphasise at this point was that of *order and cultural homogenisation*. The civilising power of 'model' countries should now spread and transform emerging Latin American nations, as they reorganised after a period of internal conflict and rival models.

Argentinian politician and educator Domingo Sarmiento offers perhaps the best summary of this attitude:

> And as if God had wanted to demonstrate to man the importance of the written word, the oldest book in the world, the first book written by man, the book par excellence, the Bible, has reached our hands after almost four thousand years, translated into a hundred languages, after being read by all nations on earth, uniting all people in a common civilisation. . . . English immigrants left for America to found, in the north of the continent, the most powerful states in the world, because they are freer and because in them all men, without distinction of age, sex, class or wealth know how much to trust science, books, talent, genius, experience or observation among all men, of all nations, at all times.[17]

Thus, the Bible became 'The Book', bearer of much-sought-after civilisation and the catalyst for a culture that favoured civilisation building. Bible societies saw this moment as their editorial *kairos*. Dr Sydney Rooy provides the following information about the role played by American and British Bible societies in the region during this period:

[17] Domingo F. Sarmiento, '*Educación Popular*, Informes al Ministro Manuel Montt, 1849, Cap VII: 'El Ejercicio del Magisterio', in Héctor Félix Bravo, *Sarmiento hacedor de la Educación Popular: Textos selectos*, pp. 56–7, available at www.bnm.me.gov.ar/giga1/documentos/10021789.pdf. Sarmiento himself, who would later become president of Argentina, had written a 'Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ', demonstrating his interest in religious issues and the spread of the Bible, despite his difficulties with the Catholic hierarchy, especially in his defence of schools run by the laity. His interest in spreading primary education led him to invite various teachers from the United States to develop primary teacher training; almost all the teachers who arrived in Argentina were members of the Methodist Church.

> In this context, Bible Societies tried to strengthen their work in Latin America. The task of Bible distribution at this stage reached extraordinary heights. While the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) had ceased operations in Mexico in 1830, it maintained its support for distribution in other countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela. The American Bible Society (ABS) established six regional agencies across Latin America, five of these during this period: River Plate (1864), Brazil (1876), Mexico (1878), West Indies (1882), Caribbean (1892) and the Andes (1920). These agencies represented twenty-seven countries, islands and/or archipelagos.[18]

Of the many notable colporteurs, we will briefly mention two from the ABS: Andrew Murray Milne (1838–1907) and Francisco Penzotti (1857–1925). Milne, Scottish by birth, began in Buenos Aires as the first permanent ABS representative in Latin America in 1864. He proudly served for forty-three years throughout the continent, except the Guianas. His travels and efforts were marked by persecution, hostility, prejudice, cholera and war. However, despite this he established bases for the work of the society in all the countries he visited. He paved the way for denominational missionaries, distributed more than 850,000 copies of the Bible, translated Scripture passages into Quechua and preached the gospel in a way that was both popular and persuasive.

Penzotti, who arrived as a young man from Italy, was converted by Milne's ministry and the Methodist missionary Thomas B. Wood. He accompanied Milne and others on three large missionary trips throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. As had been the case with Milne, he also experienced persecution, imprisonment and expulsion. He was assigned to Peru in 1888, where he was imprisoned for eight months in 1890, accused of breaking the law through his preaching and bible distribution. He was known as 'the Apostle of Central America' for his sixteen-year ministry there with the ABS. With the death of Milne, Penzotti was appointed to take his place as the executive secretary in the River Plate region comprising seven countries. He personally distributed 25,000 copies of the Bible and, under his direction, more than two million editions of the New Testament and excerpts of the Scriptures reached the hands of Spanish-language readers.[19]

Positivism challenges the Bible: creative reactions and dialogue

Positivism reached Latin America in the 1870s and permeated all disciplines, seeking not only to eliminate error and foster cosmic harmony through

[18] Rooy, 'La misión'.
[19] Rooy, 'La misión'.

the power of exact and natural sciences, but also in social and philosophical sciences, eliminating all metaphysical or mystical explanations.

In 1859 Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*, affecting not only natural sciences related to geology and palaeontology, but also history, sociology, Bible study and the history of Christian doctrine. Organicist theories became more widely accepted in understanding social phenomena with the impact of this worldview in theology and biblical sciences being hugely significant.

In 1878 Julius Wellhausen published his *History of Israel*, a pivotal work that permanently divided supporters of biblical inerrancy and verbal inspiration of holy texts and those who, like Wellhausen, began to interpret biblical texts as a historical and cultural construction. In 1885 Adolf von Harnack, a disciple of Wellhausen, published the first volume of what would be a determining work in the development of liberal theology, *The History of Dogma*, translated into English between 1894 and 1899. His approach to Bible texts through historical criticism contributed to the quest for the historical Jesus. The importance of these events for Latin America lies in the fact that some of the missionaries who reached those shores were trained in centres where such texts were studied.

In 1893 the Modern Version was produced, due to the initiative of H. B. Pratt, the pioneer of Evangelical missions in Colombia. He later moved to Mexico where, as part of a collaborative commission, he composed the text to be published by the ABS. For the first time the oldest Hebrew and Greek biblical manuscripts were used for the Spanish translation, as such texts gradually began to be made available for critical investigation. There would be a subsequent revision in 1929 that improved the language of the first edition.

Although Latin American Protestantism formed part of the liberal bloc, which along with Freemasons and politicians opposed clerical 'obscurantism', this alliance was not entirely monolithic, but instead presented areas of coexistence.

Latin American Protestant ideology from the 1870s and 1880s expressed a largely 'traditionalist evangelism', structured by biblical kerygmatic theology based on a literal reading of the Bible. This characteristic would cause the majority of Evangelical leaders to develop a negative attitude towards science, particularly that which was responsible for interfering with faith. It would be a break that, at the beginning of the next century, would be transformed into a clear theological, ideological and generational divide that would become manifest in diverse aspects of church life.

It was not within areas of applied physics and chemistry that Protestantism had its greatest problems; ultimately these were privileged and necessary tools for much-desired progress, and such sciences were respected allies. However,

the threat perceived in emerging science was the progressive overlapping being produced between some hypotheses from the natural sciences with certain 'biblical truths'. In this respect, nineteenth-century Protestantism was absolutely apologetic. In spite of this, in 1896, Latin American Protestantism produced, not without great resistance, the first book on biblical hermeneutics, by Francis D. Tubbs.

Tubbs arrived in Buenos Aires towards the end of 1894, after having worked as a teacher in a seminary in Mexico, to become the rector of the theology institute based in Mercedes, in the province of Buenos Aires. Tubbs had a solid academic background in the field of natural science, having graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University. and in 1896 he published *Elements of Biblical Hermeneutics*. From the first page, Tubbs sets the tone: he dedicates the book to his students at the institute in Mercedes and in Mexico 'and everyone who fervently and truthfully loves the divine-human word'. For Tubbs, clearly a representative of positivism, the science of Bible interpretation was made up of laws through which it was possible to discover the exact historical circumstances in which texts were constructed: 'The same literary rules and criticism used to interpret other books should be used to interpret the Bible. . . . Because although it is certain that the Bible is sacred, it should not be forgotten that it is also human literature . . . and . . . if one does not first understand the Bible grammatically, one cannot interpret it theologically.'[20]

This fear of liberal theology began to unsettle Latin American Protestants, unaware that, actually, such confrontation ended up placing them on the side of the conservative Catholicism against which they were fighting. However, such zealous defence of the threatened religion prevented them from anticipating these consequences. The opposition pursued, except on very few occasions, a path that was neither scientific nor reasoned, but rather a fearful defence against a presumed attack on the very essence of the Bible: 'Should lovers of the Bible fear attacks that may be directed against it? Do they have reason to doubt the integrity of the book in light of nineteenth century science that boasts to be the most advanced? Let that storm rage, the Bible will remain unchangeable without losing its essence.'[21]

This new evanescent atmosphere of change, transformation, crisis and universalising theories made conservative and stubborn religious groups increasingly nervous of anything deemed 'modern' and served to intensify their fears. Their response to the crisis and loss of influence of traditional revival was to

[20] Francis Tubbs, *Elements of Biblical Hermeneutics* (1896, homemade edition), p. 3.
[21] Editorial in *El Estandarte Evangélico*, Órgano de Difusión de la Iglesia Metodista Episcopal del Río de la Plata, 23 September 1897, p. 1.

shut themselves away even more. The Bible and its content, inspired letter by letter by God, was the anchor that could bind them to that lifestyle, now lost forever, whose paradigmatic symbol was 'that old-time religion that was good enough for my parents and is good enough for me'.[22]

In this climate an event would occur, the effect of which could only be appreciated many years later. In Chile, in 1907, the first Pentecostal experience occurred among a Methodist Church congregation in the city of Valparaíso resulting in the split and creation of the first Pentecostal church in Latin America, the Chilean Methodist Pentecostal Church. The movement was local and the only person to emerge from its leadership was a North American missionary, Willis Hoover, who had lived in Valparaíso since 1902. He had already had an experience of the Spirit and supported the Pentecostal movement upon arrival in South America. The experience quickly spread to other parts of the continent. The importance of this is that, in incorporating the most deprived sectors and social classes rather than migrants or the growing middle class, Pentecostalism would bring the word of the Bible to other social classes.

Clearly with Latin America in mind, the first Spanish-language version of the New Testament for this purpose, known as the Hispanic-American New Testament, in preparation since 1909 by an American/Spanish committee made up of six members and using the Greek text by Nestle for the first time, was published in 1916. In 1910 a version had been produced containing only the Gospels, and this text was reprinted in 1923 in Buenos Aires. However, its dissemination was restricted, remaining almost exclusively as a study text. United Bible Societies (UBS) also produced a revised edition of the Reina-Valera version of the Bible, published in 1909, which became the 'official' version for the majority of Evangelical churches across the American continent and was widely disseminated.

In 1916 the Baptist Publishing House published a translation of the New Testament that had been produced in Spain in 1858 by Guillermo Norton, under the title *The Scriptures of the New Covenant*. The first edition was printed in Edinburgh, and it was reprinted with the intention of using it in Latin America. The distinguishing feature of this text is that it repeatedly translates the words 'baptise' as 'submerge' and 'baptism' as 'immersion' and so, from then on in Latin America it became known as 'The Baptist Version'.

Pablo Besson, a Swiss immigrant to Argentina, in turn produced another Spanish translation of the New Testament based on the *textus receptus*, printed

[22] Old Gospel hymn: 'Give me that Old Time Religion', used as a battle cry in the fight against modernism.

for the first time in 1919. The biblical work carried out by Besson was not limited to this translation alone. His importance as a promoter of the Bible and teacher of Bible colporteurs and pastors had an enormous effect in Latin America. He died in Argentina in 1932. Two versions of the New Testament, of Roman Catholic origin, also appeared in Latin America: *The New Testament* by Juan José de la Torre in Buenos Aires (1903) and *The New Testament* by P. Guillermo (Wilhelm) Jünemann in Concepción in Chile (1928). This work is especially important in being the first translation from the original Greek into Spanish carried out in Latin America. Jünemann, born in Germany (Westfalia, 1855), arrived in Latin America as a child when his family immigrated to Chile. After finishing his studies in preparation for the priesthood he began his translation, completing the translation of the Greek texts, both the Septuagint and the New Testament. However, the Old Testament texts, drawn from the Septuagint, would not be published until 1992 when a complete version of 'The Holy Bible' would be produced. This would be the first complete translation of the Bible into Spanish from the Greek in Latin America, resulting in a literal translation, but one that was very significant in terms of the effort it involved for this priest, who finally died in Chile. However, as a result of his devotion to Greek grammar, the Spanish translation is somewhat less fluid, difficult to read and was not widely used. In Portuguese, *A Biblia Sagrada* (The Holy Bible), was translated from the Latin by Father Matos Soares, published in Lisbon, 1932 and shortly afterwards reached Brazil.

In turn, another group that would later play a decisive role made its appearance on the continent: the 'free brothers' (Plymouth Brethren), whose first promoters were Bible colporteurs. With their dispensationalist reading of the Bible, they would have influence beyond their own denomination and would promote a Bible text, the so-called Scofield Reference Bible, which would be of vital importance in the following stage.

At the turn of the century the Evangelical reaction continued to narrow its ranks, now distrusting young pastors who brought with them 'threatening' ideas. Such was the case of Gabino Rodríguez, a Spanish Argentinian Methodist pastor who, having completed his studies at Ohio Wesleyan and Boston, returned to Buenos Aires in 1924 with a clearly 'modernist' and evolutionist stance. His ideas were harshly suppressed by a leadership incapable of dialogue. Once again the Bible was disputed territory. Faced with the literal stance of his critics, Rodríguez stated:

> Some theologians 'cling', not to the Word of God, but rather to certain doctrines: a collection of ideas that suffer from the same defects nineteenth

> century science suffered from; freshness and spontaneity. . . . Could it be that your interpretation of the Bible is erroneous? Why not try to understand it through the light of science, especially when this can in no way affect your authority nor devalue its content? Why fear the introduction of modern science to religion?[23]

In opposition to the traditional literalism of the conservative missionary generation, young local pastors such as Rodríguez and many others affirmed: 'I do not see the need to cling to the letter of the Bible, in order to believe in a miraculous creation, as literalism is neither necessary nor wise. The letter kills, it is the spirit of the book that we should embody.'[24]

These words reflect and forewarn of a heated conflict from within Latin American Protestantism. In effect, as the twentieth century progressed and disputes between Catholicism and Protestantism began to give way to improved dialogue and coexistence, some began to take their distance and move closer to the Evangelical world. Publications on the subject of the Bible and liberal commentaries, such as the *Abingdon Bible Commentary*, were translated and circulated throughout the continent.

In turn, as previously mentioned, the Scofield Reference Bible grew in influence, with the first Spanish-language edition distributed in Latin America in 1939. It was reprinted numerous times, becoming an almost constant fixture in Evangelical homes across the continent. On the one hand, this edition, based on the 1909 Reina-Valera revision, highlights in different colour ink what in its interpretation are 'the words of Jesus', thus favouring literalism, while on the other it includes footnotes that relate to the dispensational plan of John Nelson Darby.

This rift between Protestant factions would be especially provoked by debate regarding the place occupied by the Bible as Word revealed by God and about the distinct ways of accessing its interpretation. Themes such as fundamentalism/modernism; social gospel/gospel of individual conversion; pre-millennialism/kingdom of God in history; and historical Jesus/dispensationalism would be the debates that, by 1945, would shake the Protestant world in Europe and the United States and would eventually redraw a new Evangelical map of Latin America. The Bible and its interpretation, having been a powerful unifying factor at the beginning of the nineteenth century, became one of the primary divisive influences in the twentieth century.

[23] Gabino Rodríguez in *El Estandarte Evagélico*, 9 August 1923, p. 458.
[24] Gabino Rodríguez in *El Estandarte Evagélico*, 9 August 1923, p. 458.

The biblical awakening in Latin America (second half of the twentieth century)

Towards the end of the 1930s a robust biblical movement began to emerge in Latin America, which continues today. Although the minority Evangelical movement had made the dissemination of the Scriptures one of its pillars for missionary action since it became established in the continent, from that time important sectors within Roman Catholicism began to work towards the advancement of the biblical text. Undoubtedly, the work of Monsignor Juan Straubinger must be mentioned here. This Catholic priest, exiled from Germany due to Nazi persecution, settled in Argentina, where he became the spark that ignited a biblical awakening in this part of the continent.

Straubinger founded the first Latin American periodical for biblical studies, *Revista Bíblica*, in Buenos Aires in 1939. This publication sought to be a journal for biblical training, integrating social and pastoral interests into the use of modern-day biblical learning tools. This was a pioneering project in Latin America, which preceded by four years the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* of Pius XII (1943), and also opened up the possibility of an investigative approach to the Bible with a certain degree of autonomy within Roman Catholicism. After going through a number of different stages, the journal is still currently in publication.

Straubinger also began a new Spanish translation of the Bible, which was published in instalments between 1948 and 1952. However, other versions, produced in Spain, also accompanied the process of biblical dissemination in Latin America. One such version was the first Roman Catholic Spanish edition translated directly from the original texts, known as the Nacar–Colunga Bible, published in 1944. Another, the Bóver–Cantera Bible, was published in 1947, also translated from the original texts and with a more fluent style than its predecessor. Both of these works were published by the Christian Authors Library. Meanwhile, in the Protestant world a new (corrected) edition of the *Nuevo Testamento de Pablo Besson* was published by the Baptist Publishing Committee in 1948, to coincide with the centenary of Besson's birth. Later in 1953, a complete revision of the Hispanic-American New Testament was released. This text appears now in the bilingual New Testament Latino American Version, published by Editorial Mundo Hispano. A new Spanish-language revision of the Reina-Valera Bible was published in 1960.

In Brazil the work of a Franciscan exegete – trained in biblical sciences in 1924 – Brother João José Pedreira de Castro, is especially noteworthy. Pedreira was a pioneer in the Catholic world for his promotion of biblical reading and

study in Brazil. At this time, the *A Biblia Sagrada*, translated from Latin by Father Matos Soares, was published in Lisbon in 1932, but also circulated in Brazil.

In response to the encyclical *Afflante Spiritu* in 1946, Father Antônio Charbel (a Brazilian Salesian who qualified as a Doctor in the Holy Scriptures in Rome) convened the First National Bible Week, which took place at the São Bento monastery in São Paulo, on 3–8 February 1947. During this period the Bible Studies League (BSL) was established. The BSL served biblical sciences specialists by organising Catholic exegetes around wide-ranging discussions and types of research; it also sought to promote Bible reading among ordinary people. A new Portuguese version, the Ave Maria Bible, translated from French and published by Ave Maria Publishers was produced in 1957.

However, the real explosion takes place in the 1960s. The change of climate brought about by the Second Vatican Council and the theological renewal which took place in Evangelical churches after the Second World War soon reached these lands and found one of its most visible expressions in the dissemination of the Bible. The development of Basic Ecclesial Communities in Latin American Roman Catholicism took as one of its core work principles the promotion of Bible reading amongst ordinary people, the so-called 'popular reading of the Bible'. Bible experts with a serious academic background, such as Carlos Mesters (Brazil) and José Severino (Argentina) reorganised their hermeneutic work around a way of reading the Bible which took into account the 'preferential option for the poor' declared at the Second General Conference of the Latin American conference of (Roman Catholic) Bishops (Medellín, 1969). 'Latin American liberation theology' was born, and the biblical work of many of the best-known Latin American exegetes began to focus on demonstrating the biblical bases of that movement. Their contributions to hermeneutics became known internationally due to the translation of their publications. One 'living' example of this biblical work in local communities is that edited by Father Ernesto Cardenal: *The Gospel in Solentiname* (1978). Hundreds of bulletins, leaflets, shorter publications and a large number of magazines and books greatly increased the amount of commentaries, paraphrases and guidelines for biblical interpretation, and were disseminated among millions of new readers of the Bible across Latin America. Ecumenical organisations, intended to provide forums for discussion and Bible propagation materials, were also created throughout the continent. Even during difficult periods of repression, and under military dictatorships that were established in the majority of Latin American countries in the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, Bible groups continued to meet, often secretly, forming one of the many popular resistance

fronts to the national security ideology that authoritarian regimes sought to impose.[25]

Meanwhile, the number of versions of the Bible, both Catholic and Evangelical, continued to multiply. For commercial reasons some are published in Spain, some in the United States and others in Latin American countries, but we will include those most widely disseminated throughout the continent in order to prepare an inexhaustive list:

The New Testament, translated by teachers at the Hispanic-American Bible Centre in Madrid, Spain, with a Mexican edition in 1961.

The Holy Bible, published by Paulinas Publications in 1964, produced by a team of biblical scholars, directed by Evaristo Martín Nieto.

The Herder Bible, also published in 1964. The biblical scholar, Serafín Ausejo directed the team that prepared this edition from the original texts. Later, Ausejo also prepared another version, building on the Ecumenical Version, which had previously been published in French and Italian.

The Jerusalem Bible, appearing in 1967 in a Spanish-language version, also from the original Hebrew and Greek, building on the French text that preceded it.

It is also necessary to mention the Jehovah's Witness version. The New Testament appeared in 1963 and the complete Bible in 1967. It is a translation from the English under the title *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

However, the Bible par excellence that had the greatest impact on the continent is *The Bible for Latin America* (or *Latin American Bible*, pastoral edition). The first edition was printed in 1972, although successive re-editions and revisions followed. When P. Bernardo Hurault, responsible for 'updating' the text, died in 2004, the Bible was in its 98th edition with more than 35 million copies already sold. It has been the edition of the Bible most used and widely spread throughout Latin America. These publications do not maintain traditional canonical order, instead turning to popular Latin American language, with its footnotes mixing exegetic clarifications with interpretations that tend to identify with predominant theological line in basic ecclesial communities, Catholic or ecumenical.

[25] For a more detailed history of these practices see Néstor Míguez, 'Lectura Latino Americana de la Biblia: experiencias y desafíos', *Cuadernos de Teología* 20 (Buenos Aires, ISEDET, 2001), pp. 77–99. For an English-language version see Néstor Míguez, 'Latin American Reading of the Bible: Experiences, Challenges and its Practice', *Journal of Latin American Hermeneutics* 1 (Summer 2004), available at www.isedet.edu.ar/jolah/journal1.htm.

The New Spanish Bible, by Luís Alonso Schökel and Juan Mateos. The Latin American edition appeared in 1976. Schökel would also produce *The Pilgrim's Bible* in 1993.

In 1978 Paulinas Publications in Mexico published *The Holy Bible*, a translation by Agustín Magaña Méndez.

Interconfessional Bible (1978), which published the New Testament as a common effort between United Bible Societies, the Christian Authors Library and the Bible House.

God Speaks Today (1979, revised in 1994), by United Bible Societies, in this case collaborating with erudite Catholics. There is also a study edition including historical and linguistic notes (2000).

The Book of the People of God Bible, by Armando Levoratti and A. B. Trusso, disciples of Straubinger, published in Argentina in 1980. There is also a digital version. It was preceded by *The Book of the New Alliance*, a version of the New Testament by the same translators, also in Buenos Aires, in 1968.

In 1981 a third revision of *The New Testament* by Pablo Besson appeared, edited by the Baptist Publishing House. It was produced to commemorate the centenary of his arrival in Argentina. It contains an extensive appendix on 'The Biblical Thought of Besson' and biographical notes about him.

Bible of the Americas (1986), published by the Lockman Foundation. An adapted version for Latin American audiences called the *New Hispanic Bible* was published in 2005.

'House of the Bible' Bible (1992), revision by a team directed by Santiago Guijarro and Miguel Salvador. There are two editions, one for Spain and another for Latin America.

In 1995, a new revision of the *Reina-Valera Bible* is produced (RVR95). It is a simplified edition, along with notes, as a study Bible.

Luciano Jaramillo, a Colombian biblical scholar, edited a version produced by an international team and published by the International Bible Society in 1999. It is known as the *New International Version* (NIV). In this case there had also been partial publications by the International Bible Society (portions, New Testament).

United Bible Societies Bible produced a new translation in 2003, disseminated as an everyday language translation.

Bible versions have also multiplied in Portuguese, some of which are mentioned below:

Successive editions of the *Almeida Bible*, in a simple format, study bibles, annotated texts, etc. were produced by the Brazilian Bible Society, with the last revision in 1985.

The *Pontifical Biblical Institute Bible*, Rome, translated from Italian and published by Paulus in 1967.

The *Jerusalem Bible*, translated by a team of Brazilian exegetes and published in 1981. A new edition, completely revised, was published in 2002.

The Voices Bible (1982), translated by a group of Brazilian Catholic exegetes.

The Sanctuary Bible, published by Sanctuary Press in 1982 (with various reprints). This Bible is distributed from the National Shrine of Aparecida, one of the most popular pilgrimage centres in Brazil (almost 5 million pilgrims visit the shrine annually).

The *Message of God Bible*, published by Loyola in 1983.

The Holy Bible, Pastoral Edition, equivalent to the Latin American Bible in Spanish, although not as widespread, published in 1990. A digital version is available online.

The Holy Bible, official translation by the National Conference of (Catholic) Bishops of Brazil (NCBB), published in 2001 by diverse publishers and in 2006, it was already in its fourth edition published directly by NCBB.

The Ecumenical Bible Translation, based on the Ecumenical French Translation, published by Loyola in 1994.

The Brazilian Bible Society (BBS) produced a *New Translation in the Language of Today*, managing to adapt the language to that of everyday use. Launched in 2000, it is one of successive revisions of the Almeida version, the main contribution to the spread of the Bible in the Protestant world in Brazil. In turn, the BBS created a Bible museum in Sao Paolo, one of the largest of its kind in the world.

The Pilgrim's Bible, by Luís Alonso Schökel, translated into Spanish, published by Paulus in November 2002.

In addition to editions of the Bible in Spanish and Portuguese, we must also include editions of complete Bible texts, New Testaments or portions produced in the native languages of indigenous populations. Thus, there are Bible texts in 420 languages in Latin America and the Caribbean. While it is impossible to provide a complete list here, below are translations that are currently in process, according to a UBS report:

ARGENTINA

- Pilagá – Audio scriptures
- Toba Sur – Bible
- Toba West (Sombrero Negro) – New Testament

BOLIVIA
- Chipaya
- Ignaciano
- Quechua Norte

BRAZIL
- Guarani-Mbyá – Excerpts
- Tukano – New Testament

CHILE
- Romané

COSTA RICA
- Bribri – New Testament

ECUADOR
- Quichua de Chimborazo – study Bible

GUATEMALA
- Achi de Cubulco – Old Testament
- Jakaltek – New Testament
- Kekchi – Old Testament
- Mam Ostuncalco – Old Testament
- Pokomchi – Old Testament

MEXICO
- Maya de Yucatán – Bible revision
- Mixe: Mazatlán – New Testament
- Mixe: Quezaltpec – New Testament and excerpts from the Old Testament
- Purepecha – New Testament
- Ralamuli (Tarahumara) – excerpt
- Tojolabal – excerpt
- Tzeltal: Bachajón – New Testament

NICARAGUA
- Miskitu

PANAMA
- Kuna – Old Testament

PARAGUAY
- Enxet (Lengua Sur)
- Guaraní

PERU
- Cashinahua – New Testament
- Quechua de Abancay/Apurimac
- Quechua de Cuzco – study Bible
- Languages of the Amazon Basin

This expansion in biblical dissemination and interest in reaching different populations across the continent is not solely due to the biblical awakening of the Catholic Church, but also a renewed Evangelical presence, above all in the 1970s, stemming from the growth of charismatic and Pentecostal movements. This meant that Bible study would also reach the most isolated social groups, where among new Pentecostal groups and ecclesial basic Catholic communities the Bible became a book to be found amidst humble people, perhaps for the first time in Latin America where carrying a bible under one's arm on a Sunday was a symbol of Evangelical belonging. Due to this Pentecostal influence, more significant in some countries than others (with Chile and Guatemala in first place, followed by Brazil), it became the norm to see people reading the Bible on public transport, openly preaching the Bible in public places or with signs displaying biblical verses in sports stadiums. Generally, UBS texts such as the Reina-Valera and God Speaks Today versions were used. In some places the influence of these groups even caused monuments to be erected in honour of the Bible, perhaps as a way of counteracting the presence of images of the Virgin or patron saints from dominant Catholicism. Some groups linked to these tendencies began the task of Bible dissemination and even translation into indigenous languages, related to the Summer Institute of Linguistics (in association with Wycliffe Bible Translators), whose actions caused much controversy in countries it reached, due to accusations linking it with North American imperialist penetration in the continent.

Such active Pentecostal presence, with a strong Evangelical tone, increased the dissemination and visibility of the Bible but did not necessarily create a new 'biblical theology'. Except for its emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, healing miracles and the gift of tongues its reading was based on previous interpretations, particularly that of Darbyian dispensationalism (with emphasis on the renouncing of history and the prospect of a 'second coming'), substitutionary sacrificial fundamentalism (with its emphasis on individual salvation) or in expressions of a theology of holiness (individual) of a Wesleyan North American tradition. Such positions on questions of public and private morality, or ways of explaining faith, reveal the influence of preachers such as Billy Graham or Luis Palau, or more recently Benny Hinn and their local imitators,

trained in the United States. Training centres and seminaries for these groups continued to go from strength to strength in terms of Bible study, primarily using translations of study texts from Anglo-Saxon Evangelicalism, or adaptations of local texts, without much theological innovation.

It is indeed certain that as it develops, there is a syncretism with vernacular culture reflected in forms of ecclesial organisation or its relation to power. However, this scarcely influences the reading of the Bible text, more than how some selected verses are used in the form of a slogan or the foundation for some songs. The Bible assumes, in this daily use by popular branches of Pentecostalism, 'magical' properties, with powers to heal, to ward off spells, etc. – not through its reading, but rather through its presence as a cultural artefact (sleeping with a bible under one's pillow, touching painful body parts with a bible or carrying a bible in one's pocket in dangerous situations). In turn, from the 1990s onwards, a new turn towards 'neo-Pentecostalism' can be noticed, where its postmodern quality allows it to highlight emotive elements of religious experience, postponing actual reading, preaching and study of the Bible. This also happens in certain cults in rural indigenous areas or in Afro-American enclaves, where syncretic ritual expressions have taken the central place the Bible once held in 'Protestant' liturgy.

In recent years, on the other hand, a new closeness to local reality has emerged among a number of Pentecostal groups (and others traditionally linked with a more conservative form of Protestantism), with greater emphasis on social participation. However, this did not generate a noticeably different form of reading the Bible, but rather it accompanied, with its own emphasis on the centrality of spiritual experience, the interpretations emerging from experiences of other Christian groups also involved in the fight for social justice, giving rise to what was known as 'integral evangelism'. Such groups more actively linked to historical Protestantism are contributing in general to what we can call Latin American biblical hermeneutics.

Latin American biblical hermeneutics

As is possible to appreciate, such an increase in Bible versions and translations in the last fifty years demonstrates a level of activity previously unseen in the dissemination of the Bible across the continent. However, this is not merely a manic stockpiling of translations and versions, but rather it reflects real biblical expansion in the study and careful interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. Some theological teaching establishments began to offer the possibility of pursuing doctorates in theology for the first time in Latin America

(in Argentina: Buenos Aires – Higher Evangelical Institute of Theological Studies; in Brazil: Sao Paolo – Methodist University of Sao Paolo; in Sao Leopoldo – Lutheran School of Theology; and Puerto Rico – Evangelical Seminary of San Juan), with the first graduates, as was the case with the majority of students in those early years, opting for the field of Bible studies. In 1989 the *Latin American Journal of Biblical Interpretation* (*RIBLA*) was founded, with editions in Portuguese and Spanish (three volumes annually), gathering in its pages the most distinguished biblical scholars in Latin America, some of whom had already achieved international acclaim. Occasionally, a selection of thematic articles from this journal has been chosen, translated into English and published as book compilations. Other compilations in the field of theology regularly take articles on biblical interpretation from the best-known Latin American scholars. Biblical websites in the continent multiply at such a rate that it becomes impossible to correctly classify them.

During this time exegesis and biblical hermeneutics once again assumed central importance, as was the case in times of conquest and in conflicts over hegemony. 'Popular' readings clashed with official interpretations to the point where under dictatorships there were threats prohibiting the sale of the Latin American edition of the Bible, alleging that its photos and explanatory notes 'encouraged subversion'. This 'Bible censorship' formed a part of such repression, an attitude to which part of the Catholic episcopate and some conservative Evangelical groups were forced to yield. In this respect it was the Argentinian dictatorship more than any other that made its alliance with conservative sectors of churches public. Thus, the bishop of San Luis, Idelfonso Sansierra, intervened in favour of the military dictatorship of Jorge R. Videla to ensure 'theological and institutional' backing of his denunciation of the Bible. He says in a statement: 'I urge those loyal followers who, in good faith acquired it, to destroy it and I would appreciate if bookshops and kiosks would return their copies which are an insult to God.' This was part of an intelligence report by the General Department of Policing and Information of the Ministry for Internal Affairs of the dictatorship brought to the internal sub-secretary on 6 September 1976. On 16 October 1976 the same bishop published similar sentiments in the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nación*, which supported the dictatorship: 'This Bible is an exaltation of Marxism and its authors are Marxists in disguise serving a plan established by international Communism, which for many years has been determined to win over Latin American people, not under the sign of the sickle and hammer but rather under the sign of the cross.' Other bishops agreed with his opinions, prohibiting the dissemination and reading of the Bible in their respective dioceses.

However, Bishop Jaime de Nevares, from Neuquén, one of the co-presidents of the Permanent Assembly of Human Rights who stood up to the dictatorship, recommended it to his dioceses.[26] As was the case in the colonial period, during such repression the Bible was a point of division within Latin American Christianity and of tension among its most advanced branches and political projects of domination.

These conflicts and tensions led to a renewal of biblical science itself. New hermeneutic approaches had emerged from these developments in biblical studies in the Latin American context. Although initially scholars adopted the methods and tools provided by Western exegesis, especially those of European origin (historical critical methods and later semiotic contributions), the 'poverty–liberation' axis would introduce changes including their own methods and assumptions. Thus, a hermeneutic of suspicion would extend to the very authors who theorised on such issues in other continents, generating new approaches, increasingly marked by political and economic struggle, but also by another type of vindication. In this way, the so-called see–judge–act method emerged, rising above suspicion of social reality and the elements of domination which are found in it, including among the latter even modes of biblical interpretation. Social sciences, especially those drawing on critical schools of thought, are tools used in this task, thus constituting the 'seeing'. From there begins 'judgement', understood as a return to reading reality from the possibilities of liberation. Once again, this implies a re-reading of Bible texts, taking one's starting point in the questions and situations of oppressed subjects. However, the true hermeneutic circle is not completed with a new interpretation, but rather in 'action', in engaging with the social reality with transforming practices, in agreement with the new vision. This practice, which will confront new contradictions, will alone allow a return to reality with a critical vision, where a new way of 'observing' can be possible. Through this process there is also a 'celebration', the doxological dimension of the study of the Word of God, which nourishes hope in this struggle.

Thus, more interpretations appeared and, while new advances were made at the grassroots level and within the Bible movement, the focus was on new Bible interpretations. Feminism and gender theories accompanied

[26] For data regarding this process see María Soledad Catoggio, 'Control, Censorship and Government in the case of the "Latin American Bible": A Foucaultian Perspective' ('Control, Censura y Gobierno en el caso de la llamada "Biblia Latinoamericana": Una perspectiva foucaultiana'), UBA Social Sciences Faculty, available at www.iigg.fsoc.uba.ar/Jovenes_investigadores/3JornadasJovenes/Templates/Eje%20Poder%20y%20Dominacion/Catoggio%20-%20Poder.pdf.

similar movements emerging in other parts of the world, acquiring their own nuances in Latin America. Articles, books and a variety of doctoral theses from feminist and gender hermeneutics began to appear, setting these perspectives in the context of the concrete experiences of Latin American women (and men). However, on the five-hundredth anniversary of the European landing on the continent (1992), indigenous movements began their own vindications, refusing to simply be subsumed by class categories. A biblical hermeneutic stemming from their own cultural roots began to strengthen, generating an 'indigenous reading of the bible' and an 'indigenous theology'. Something similar occurred among groups of farmers, communities of African descent and so-called 'emerging subjects'. The *RIBLA* index (www.ribla.org) is an indicator of this process, in that it began to dedicate a number of volumes to acknowledging these new contributions. The material produced in recent years is so vast that it is impossible to summarise. What emerges is a form of new exploration in biblical discourse, in addition to a reconsideration of the role the Bible occupies in culture and the authority it commands.

The dynamic of biblical hermeneutics in Latin America does not operate in isolation. In other Third World regions similar movements emerged, in some cases linked by exchange of contributions, studies and authors. This does not mean that there has not been controversy and difference of opinions and visions; however, the dissemination of the Bible throughout the continent has undergone enormous change. While at the beginning of its 'evangelisation' the Bible was a religious icon, it gradually began to open up and share its message, generating controversy, up to the present where it occupies an undeniable role in Latin American culture.

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The Bible in Asia

R. S. SUGIRTHARAJAH

This chapter is about some of the distinctive features of the reception history of the Bible in Asia. It will highlight the following: (a) textual controversies that occurred in Asia; (b) the employment of the Bible in a multi-religious context; (c) Asian portrayals of Jesus; (d) the recent surfacing of minority voices such as the *dalits*, *burakumin*, women and indigenous people; and (e) the two recent entrants on the scene: post-colonialism and Asian diasporic interpretation. In addressing these I shall bring out issues at the centre of interpretation, the personalities who shaped the debate, historical moments that informed the discourse, and the methods and theories that fashioned reading practices.

Biblical controversies and national struggles

Asia has had its own share of biblical controversies. Unlike those in the West, which were characterised by questions posed by the Enlightenment or denominational differences, Asian debates were waged under the rubric of national struggle and national identity in a colonial context. These textual confrontations indicate that the 'other', who is normally perceived as hapless and mute, was, in fact, resilient and an active agent of his or her destiny, and used the very tools supplied by missionaries and turned them against them.

The Bengali, the Baptist missionary and their biblical battles

One of the earliest textual confrontations in Asia was that between the Bengali Rammohun Roy (1772–1833) and the Baptist missionary Joshua Marshman (1768–1837).

Roy was not the stereotypical native. He was by birth, background and education many stations above his Baptist adversary. He was proficient not only in

Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic but also in the biblical languages. His pioneering efforts in interreligious studies prompted Monier Monier-Williams to regard him as 'the first earnest-minded investigator of comparative religion that the world has produced'.[1] Roy was very supportive of missionary work, and was one of the signatories requesting the Scottish General Assembly to send more missionaries. Before he produced his controversial text he used to attend the Bible translation sessions of the Serampore Baptists. The text in question was *The Precepts of Jesus: The Guide to Peace and Happiness. Extracted from the Books of the New Testament, Ascribed to Four Evangelists* (1820). Ironically, it was published in the very press owned by the Serampore Baptists. This scalpelled version consisted largely of the ethical teachings of Jesus found in the Synoptics and a few passages from St John's Gospel. He was ruthless in weeding out genealogies, historical incidents, biographical details, supernatural events, miraculous stories and doctrinal teachings. He was clear as to why these passages had to go: the doctrines were, in his view, unscriptural; historical incidents were liable to be doubted and disputed by free thinkers; and the miracles carried 'little weight' among Indians fed on the heavy diet of supernatural deeds of their own gods and goddesses. His object was to rectify the message misperceived, as he saw it, by the missionaries, and rescue it from doctrinal entanglements. Roy believed that the essence of the gospel was expressed mainly through the moral teachings of Jesus. It was not the person but his ethical principles that were crucial. The Jesus that emerged in *The Precepts* was an exemplary moral guru. Such an attempt at separating Jesus, the divine incarnation, from his ethical precepts went against the theological views of the missionaries brought up on the scriptural evidence for the doctrines.

The Baptists, who were committed to an evangelical understanding of Christology which emphasised the 'saving blood' of Christ, felt that a firm stance had to be taken against Roy's version of Jesus. Marshman wrote a series of theologically dense rebuttals reiterating the traditional position in the Baptist magazine, *Friend of India*, later published under the title *A Defence of the Deity and Atonement of Jesus, in Reply to Ram Mohun Roy of Calcutta* (1922). Loosely put, his argument was that the Bible contained the basic tenets and enshrined the foundational doctrines of evangelical Christianity such as the atonement, the trinity and the divinity of Christ. He traversed the entire canon to find the evidence for these evangelical dogmas. He sought to demonstrate early indications of the trinity even in such unlikely places as Judges and

[1] Monier Monier-Williams, *Religious Thought and Life in India. Part 1: Vedism, Brahmanism, and Hinduism* (London: John Murray, 1883), p. 479.

Isaiah. Marshman objected that 'when stripped of those doctrines' the Holy Scriptures became 'a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence'.[2] The ensuing exegetical battle was tedious and tortuous. Roy produced four appeals to the Christian public.

A close look at the debate will reveal that Roy and Marshman agreed on the authority of the Scriptures and that both were using the King James Version to validate their cases. For Roy the appropriate stance towards scriptures was not the veneration of the text, but a proper investigation of it with the help of reason. He had no qualms in deleting narratives which went against rational thinking. For Marshman the Scriptures were 'divine oracles' and 'Divine Writings' and therefore 'the authenticity of its narratives and the reasonableness and importance of its doctrines' should not be doubted.[3] Moreover, the Scriptures had a grand design and the doctrines enshrined in them strengthened their textual unity, and one could not simply pick and choose as Roy had done. Roy and Marshman were both convinced of Jesus' significance for salvation, but the similarity ended there. They differed as to how salvation was to be attained. For Roy it was not about the payment of a debt for sin, but simply the enacting of the words of Jesus in daily life. For Marshman it was a total surrender of one's life to Jesus because he had sacrificed his life for the salvation of humankind. For him the person of Jesus was more important than his moral teachings. For Roy the New Testament was about the enactment of the ethical precepts and for Marshman it was about doctrinal correctness. Instead of reasoning out his case, Marshman, in a moment of frustration, took refuge in the words of the Psalmist: 'If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?'[4] Roy and Marshman were, of course, speaking from different cultural and theological perspectives, and as such they were talking past one another.

The exchange between Roy and Marshman was not remarkable for its exegetical brilliance. What was important was the cultural context – the colonial milieu in which the controversy took place. An interesting aspect was the use of the colonial label 'heathen' in the debate: throughout the controversy Marshman kept on calling Roy a 'heathen'. The implication was that an unbelieving native was incapable of making any intelligent contribution to the debate. It was thoughtless on the part of Marshman to call Roy a 'heathen', for he knew well that Roy was an articulate scholar and a religious reformer who

[2] Marshman, *A Defence of the Deity and Atonement of Jesus Christ*, p. 8.
[3] Marshman, *A Defence of the Deity and Atonement of Jesus Christ*, p. 18.
[4] Marshman, *A Defence of the Deity and Atonement of Jesus Christ*, p. 65.

had fought endless battles with his own Brahmin pundits over the unsavoury aspects of Hinduism. Roy thought the use of the term 'heathen' was 'unchristian'. He turned the tables and asked the public to read his text and decide who was the 'heathen'. For Roy the whole dispute was about authority and knowledge. He was convinced that Marshman was not presenting well-reasoned-out arguments but simply asserting the power of a conqueror. As Roy put it, Marshman's interpretation was bolstered by the 'virtue of conquest'.[5]

Divine mandate and Christian mandarin

The second instance where the Bible played a significant role in Asia was in the Taiping Rebellion (1850–64). The revolt was motivated and guided by Hong Xiuquan (1814–64), a teacher who lived among the rural population and was familiar with the Chinese classics. His reading of the Bible provided him with resources to resist three oppressive forces of the day: the repressive Manchu rule, feudal mandarin practices, and foreign and missionary intruders. The story has it that, after failing the civil service examination three times – an examination based on Chinese classics, and a sure route to a government post – Hong had a series of strange visions and mystical experiences. In these he was taken to heaven and commissioned by God to exterminate evil and save the righteous. The evil included the Manchu dynasty, the magical rites of Taoism, the idol worship of Buddhism and the veneration of saints in Roman Catholicism. How he came to connect his visions and mystical experience to biblical narratives, how he was commissioned by the biblical God, was unclear. It looked as if they happened by chance, but his cousin Li Chung Fang drew attention to a book that Hong had read nine years previously and had totally forgotten. This book was a compilation known as *The Benevolent Words to Advise the World* by a Chinese convert called Liang Fa, a printer by profession. It consisted of biblical citations, paraphrases of biblical scriptural verses, sermons, statements about biblical truth and general principles about religion. To Hong's great surprise, the contents of the book seemed to authenticate the visions he had been having. This corroboration further reinforced the idea that the divine assignment he had received was genuine and that the God who had presented him with such a task was Shangdi, of whom these Western books and Chinese classics spoke. By mixing the popular Chinese concept of the Heavenly God with his vision of Christianity

[5] Ghose (ed.), *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, p. 201.

and Confucian principles, Hong was able to create a potent religion which supported his anti-feudal and anti-Western goals.

Hong's visions have serious hermeneutical and political implications. In his mystical trips to heaven he was supposed to have met with God and Jesus. These heavenly encounters led Hong to believe that he was the Son of God, and the younger brother of Jesus. Hong described God as a 'man venerable in years, with golden beard and dressed in black robe', who offered Hong a sword to 'exterminate the demons'[6] and was willing to offer further help to purge all evil forces: 'Take Courage and do the work; I will assist thee in every difficulty.'[7] While in heaven, the old man asked Hong to look down from above. Hong could not believe what he saw – the decadence and the wickedness of humanity rendered him speechless. The old man also promised that 'all men shall turn' to Hong and 'all treasures shall flow' to him. In his vision Hong also saw a man of middle age whom he called the elder brother, who went with him on a mission to exterminate the evil spirits. Hong also saw in his visions both the old man and the elder brother reprimanding Confucius. The old man rebuked Confucius for his muddle-headed teaching, while the elder brother castigated him for writing 'bad books for the instruction of people' and for corrupting his 'younger brother' (the reference is to Hong) through his books.[8] Confucius first tried to argue, but became speechless and seemed ashamed. What these mystical experiences confirmed was that Hong's mission on earth was to rid China of evil influences, which included the Manchus, Taoists, Buddhists, Confucians and Westerners.

Unlike Rammohun – or J. C. Kumparappa, whom we shall encounter later – Hong's hermeneutical enterprise was largely a matter of tampering with biblical texts and making marginal notes in order to propagate his own ideological version of biblical religion. What he did with the Bible was amazing and radical. His explanatory notes came to be known as the 'Taiping Bible'. The fullest version contained the first six books of the Hebrew Scripture and the entire New Testament, which Hong called the Former Testament.

Hong's marginal notes are numerous, and pregnant with theological and ideological meanings which require close scrutiny. For our purpose I shall limit consideration to Hong's three hermeneutical improvisations. One has to do with his re-reading of the biblical narratives to suit his politics and theology. His belief was that he was divinely commissioned to regulate the world.

[6] Hamberg, *The Vision of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, p. 10.
[7] Hamberg, *The Vision of the Kwang-si Insurrection*, pp. 10–11.
[8] Cheng, *Chinese Sources for the Taiping Rebellion*, p. 8.

Hong was clear about the atrocities inflicted on the land and the people both by China's own rulers and by foreign invaders. In his view evil had ensnared humanity and he had the divine commission to destroy it. Hong's interpretation of the Parable of the Tares reflects this: 'The Father and the Great Elder Brother descend upon earth to slay the vicious and save the righteous, to gather the wheat and burn the tares. This has come true.'[9] Similarly, his marginal note on Matthew 10:32–3 reinforced the idea that he was called upon by God to 'exterminate the vicious and save the righteous'.[10]

Hong's second improvisation relates to his Christological perception that God and Jesus have separate existences, and that Jesus should not be confused with God. For him Shangdi was the supreme God. He was attracted to the notion that God and Jesus were two different entities, and configured a Jesus without the traditional divine qualities. This was in contradiction to the missionary preaching of the day. Hong was tireless in his assertion that Jesus was not God. There are a number of instances where he makes his Christological position clear. His comments on Mark 12:9 reveal his mind: 'The Great Elder brother stated quite clearly there is only one Great Lord. Why did the disciples later suppose that Christ was God? If he was, there would be two Gods. Respect this.' This is again apparent in his annotation on Acts 4:24: 'That God is the Supreme Lord means that the Heavenly Father our Supreme Lord is God, not Christ is God.' To reinforce his claim that God and Jesus are two persons, Hong cites Stephen's vision where Jesus is figured as standing separately from God.[11]

His third improvisation has to do with his securing biblical validation for the establishment of an alternative Heavenly Kingdom of Peace which confronted both the Manchu dynasty and Western intruders. Hong identified the Christian Paradise with his own Heavenly Kingdom in Nanking. His annotation on Acts 15:15–16 reads: 'Now God and Christ have descended into the world, and are rebuilding the temple of God at the Heavenly capital of the Heavenly Dynasty.' He identified Nanking as an earthly 'Small Paradise' as opposed to heaven as the 'Great Paradise': the 'Small Paradise on earth is where the souls give glory to God' (1 Cor. 15:45, 46, 49). Nanking was the 'New Jerusalem sent down from Heaven by God the Heavenly Father and is the present Heavenly capital. This is true' (Rev. 3:12). The creation of the heavenly dynasty was the fulfilment of what Jesus foretold in Matthew: 'Thus the Great

[9] Cheng, *Chinese Sources for the Taiping Rebellion*, p. 84.
[10] Cheng, *Chinese Sources for the Taiping Rebellion*, p. 84.
[11] Cheng, *Chinese Sources for the Taiping Rebellion*, p. 86.

Elder Brother formerly issued an edict foretelling the coming of the Heavenly Kingdom soon, meaning that the Heavenly Kingdom would come into being on earth. Today the Heavenly Father and Heavenly Elder Brother descend into the world to establish the Heavenly Kingdom.'[12]

Hong's employment of biblical texts was probably the first time that the Bible was put to use for political purposes in Asia. Unlike Roy and Kumarappa, Hong did not have any missionary opponent to worry about. In fact, missionaries saw him as an ally in spreading Christianity and paving the way for modernity in China. The only missionary who raised any issue with Hong was Joseph Edkins of the London Missionary Society. His dispute had largely to do with Hong's failure to apprehend 'rightly the true Scripture doctrine of the person of Christ'.[13] Hong's reply was to reiterate what he had long been saying, that Jesus was the 'first-born' and not the 'only-begotten son', and had no equal status with God. Jesus was only a holy one. Hermeneutically, Hong stood within the annotating tradition that started with the Geneva Bible where the Puritans used the margins to settle political and religious scores. In this, Hong was not only able to read his political vision into the text, but also to claim kinship with a Jewish God and his son and insert himself into salvation history. The biblical vision of Paradise offered Hong the promise to overthrow all the oppressive forces – empires and religious institutions – which were hindrances to the people. Like all proponents of messianic movements, Hong blended traditional texts and personal revelations to create his own vision for society. In doing so, instead of waiting for a messiah, he proclaimed himself as God's own son to lead the liberation of his people. The political momentum that he initiated, however, ended in failure and a heavy loss of life. What he failed to note was that the very Bible which provided him with creative impulses foretold not only Paradise and bliss but also pain and defeat.

The Gandhian and his Bible

A third instance where the Bible fuelled a debate was when J. C. Kumarappa, an Indian Christian, challenged the Anglican bishop of Calcutta and Metropolitan, Foss Westcott, at the height of India's Independence struggle. This debate is remarkable for the simple reason that a 'native' Christian was using the Bible to make controversial statements on Gandhi and the national movement. The immediate context was the civil disobedience movement

[12] Cheng, *Chinese Sources for the Taiping Rebellion*, p. 83.
[13] Edkins, 'Narrative of a Visit to Nanking', p. 295.

in the 1930s, when an interesting exegetical exchange occurred between Kumarappa and Westcott. What prompted this exegetical embroilment was the brutality faced by Indian volunteers at the hands of the colonial police. These volunteers were protesting against the salt tax imposed by the British government. Kumarappa was upset by the savage treatment of these volunteers, which ranged from extreme beatings to crushing of their testicles. Kumarappa wrote an open letter entitled 'An Appeal to All Christian Workers and Missionaries'. Briefly put, he conceded that the Indian national struggle had only a limited appeal to Indian Christians and that not all would be supportive of civil disobedience. Even among those who were sceptical, however, there could not be any 'difference of opinion' about non-violence as a valid method, especially when it was 'enjoined by their Master'.[14] Of course, missionaries such as C. F. Andrews had for many years drawn attention to the Christian and New Testament significance of Gandhi's political techniques. What Kumarappa was trying to do on this occasion was to impress upon those Indian Christians who were doubtful and those foreign missionaries who were suspicious of the Indian independence movement that the non-violent method adopted by the freedom fighters was a genuine Christian practice based on the teachings of Jesus. He sent a copy of the letter with a covering note to Westcott. In this note Kumarappa expressed his concern that the police atrocities were causing serious harm to the image of the Christian church in India and that the bishop should make use of his influence to register a protest and use his authority to urge the British government to adopt non-violent methods, the very approach advocated by Gandhi. Kumarappa reiterated the point he made in his original letter that 'non-violence cannot be treated as a matter of policy. It is one of the basic principles inculcated and practised by Christ.'[15]

Westcott, for all his Cambridge education, misread the letter and thought that Kumarappa was asking him to support the political aspirations of the Indian nationalists. In his reply, while being supportive of Gandhi's social reforms, which in Westcott's view were in line with the teachings of Jesus, he did not hesitate to show his displeasure at the Mahatma's political engagement in a number of ways. First, he reminded Kumarappa that Jesus had not had any political ambition. The bishop cited the incident in St John's Gospel (John 6:14–15) where, after the feeding miracle, the crowd was trying to make Jesus a king so that – in Kumarappa's words – he 'might lead them to assert

[14] Kumarappa, *Christianity*, p. 83.
[15] Kumarappa, *Christianity*, p. 87.

their national independence and secure their freedom from Roman Rule'.[16] Secondly, he pointed out that disobedience went against the law and this was not God's way of bringing changes. He asked: 'Can we expect that Jesus Christ who came to reveal the character of God would so utterly repudiate this revelation?'[17] Much of the suffering in the world, the bishop reckoned, was caused by going against the law, and, in most cases, was done in ignorance, but he was quick to point out that 'in present civil obedience, there is no question of ignorance. It is deliberate and is intended to over-throw the Government.'[18] Thirdly, he cited Jesus and Paul as exemplars of obedience to the law. To reinforce his argument, the Bishop cited Jesus' words 'Render unto Caesar things that are Caesar's' and went on to say that far from being an agitator, Jesus encouraged his disciples to obey the Pharisees and Scribes: 'Whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.' Furthermore, the bishop showed his irritation at Kumarappa's use of Jesus as an example of, and his teachings as a warrant for, civil disobedience. In the bishop's view Jesus' non-retaliatory injunction was pronounced in the context of the state maintaining law and order. To make matters worse, the bishop accused Kumarappa of not being grateful for the safe and stable government offered by the British.

Kumarappa's reply was vigorous and analytical. His rebuttal was mainly in the form of correcting the bishop's factual and exegetical misunderstandings. First, he sought to rectify some of his erroneous assumptions. He pointed out that nowhere in the letter had he mentioned the phrase 'civil disobedience', nor had he canvassed the bishop to support the political cause espoused by Gandhi. All that he wanted the bishop to do was to use his office to advise the government to adopt less aggressive measures towards the political campaigners, because the methods they used were inhuman. An opponent such as Gandhi deserved better treatment. No 'gentleman' – or for that matter anyone who claimed to follow the 'Prince of Peace' – could tolerate such 'brutalities and torture'. Kumparappa also made it clear that he was not referring to the current political situation, but only reiterating the importance of using the principle of non-violence in resolving disputes. He did not hesitate to remind the bishop that when it suited the British their national interest came first, rather than upholding the Christian principle of non-violence: 'You remember how during the World War practically every pulpit was turned into a recruiting sergeant's platform and every church service ended with that

[16] Kumarappa, *Christianity*, p. 88.
[17] Kumarappa, *Christianity*, p. 89.
[18] Kumarappa, *Christianity*, p. 91.

morbidly narrow nationalistic song "God save the King" which embodies the "tribal God" idea of King David.'[19]

Kumarappa was a layman, but he was able to take on the bishop's interpretation of the Bible. He told the bishop that the leader of the church and missionaries had 'torn from the context' the teachings of Jesus, had 'twisted passages' and had 'partially quoted to meet their national needs', and that this had 'misled' the flocks committed to their charge.[20] He charged the bishop with offering a partial reading of the Bible. He was able to demonstrate that in a Johannine passage which the bishop quoted there was no evidence of any political ambition on the part of Jesus. It was the people who misunderstood Jesus' role after the miracle and took him for a temporal king, whereas Jesus, on his part, had no such idea, as was indicated when 'he departed into the mountain himself alone'. He then challenged the bishop's citation of Jesus' words about obeying the Scribes and Pharisees. Kumarappa conceded that these sayings were from Jesus, but reminded the bishop to see them in their context. As long as they upheld the law of Moses, Jesus urged his disciples to follow the Scribes and Pharisees. But this was not a slavish obedience, as the bishop implied. For had the bishop looked at Matthew 23 where this utterance was found and the Scribes and Pharisees were described as sitting in the seat of Moses, and as such were the guardians of Mosaic law, he would have found in that very chapter warnings and curses against them: 'Woe unto you ye blind guides', and 'Beware of the Scribes and Pharisees'. Kumarappa also pointed out that 'meekly' following the Scribes and Pharisees was not enough; one had to go beyond the scribal and pharisaic expectations and excel: 'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. 2:20). More importantly, Kumarappa pointed out to the bishop that Jesus himself did not always strictly follow the prescriptions of the Scribes and the Pharisees. Jesus' violation of the Sabbath laws was a clear case of breaking the injunction. Kumarappa's inference was that when there are immoral and human-made laws such as the salt tax and excise policy 'the righting process will lead to a disturbance of the peace'.[21]

Kumarappa differentiated between the religion of the missionaries which was 'smug, selfish, and individualistic' and the personal religion of Jesus which had social commitment or, as he put it, 'social order'[22] which resonated with

[19] Kumarappa, *Christianity*, p. 93.
[20] Kumarappa, *Christianity*, p. 93.
[21] Kumarappa, *Christianity*, p. 98.
[22] Kumarappa, *Christianity*, p. 77.

the Hindu idea of a joint-family system with all its shortcomings. Kumarappa used biblical images very creatively either to expose the hypocrisy of the British government or to shame the institutionalised church. He equated the government bureaucrats with 'Herodians'. He accused the bishop of Petrine betrayal.

This was a minor clash compared to the earlier prolonged hermeneutical battle between Rammohun Roy and Joshua Marshman. The epistolary exchange between Kumarappa and Westcott was a brief one because the Christian press at that time was not interested in prolonging the controversy. It felt that intra-church infighting would not be helpful to the political peace process that was being initiated at that time. Like Rammohun Roy, Kumarappa was a formidable opponent. He was both privileged and highly educated. The bishop, with his third-class degree in the natural science tripos from Cambridge, was no match for him. Neither was a biblical specialist and therefore their approach was necessarily amateurish. Both showed a broad commitment to the Bible and its civilising influence. Both affirmed that the Bible possessed crucial religious insights, but where Kumarappa differed was that he could not follow its teachings uncritically. For him, the four Gospels formed 'some of the most human documents', setting forth the life and teachings of Jesus.[23] He had a modernist understanding of the Bible: its message could be deciphered and applied to contemporary cultural and political needs. If the Bible was to have any cultural influence in India, it must become part of peoples' aspiration for freedom. Westcott, on the other hand, believed that the Bible's message was universal and therefore from his perspective could not be determined by contextual needs. This debate was basically about the location and character of a religiously authoritative text such as the Bible in a politically charged situation.

The multi-religious context

One of the critical questions that Asian Christians face is how to respond to the presence of the many scriptural traditions in Asia. The oldest response, and one that continues to have purchase among Asian churches, is the comparative method. It has its origins in the colonial period, and persists even today. The comparative study focuses mainly on similarities and differences between Christian and other textual traditions. Its main purpose is to draw attention to the religious deficiencies of other sacred texts and to claim superiority

[23] Kumarappa, *Practice and Precepts*, p. 1.

for the Christian faith. The comparison undertaken has largely to do with doctrinal and conceptual matters, and is carried on at the redacted level of the texts rather than by scrutinising them closely. This is mainly because those engaged in such study have not been professionally trained as biblical scholars. The method here is to compare Christian tenets such as incarnation, resurrection and apocalypse with Hindu notions of avatar, rebirth or *kaliyuga*. This comparative study works on a binary understanding which perceives the East as spiritual, mystical and intuitive, whereas the West is seen as material, intellectual and rational. Another feature of such a comparative method is to essentialise the religions of Asia. They are seen as static, and are homogenised, thus flattening out the inner contradictions which are intrinsic to these traditions. The comparative method works on the assumption that Christian texts contain the sole truth and that this truth should illuminate and purify the defects in the scriptural texts of other faiths. This method has been to a large extent aggressive and triumphalistic.

Recently, scholars in Asia dissatisfied with the comparative approach, which does not do justice to the theological integrity, cultural legacy and social location of these religious texts, have come up with a number of other reading strategies.

One such is the 'symbiotic' reading suggested by Aloysius Pieris, which came out of Pieris's long and innovative involvement with Buddhist–Christian dialogue in Sri Lanka. What he proposes is 'a living encounter of the texts' which results in articulating 'implicit meanings which these texts would not reveal unless they are mutually exposed to each other's illuminating disclosures'.[24] This symbiotic approach is 'conducive to reciprocal spiritual nourishment among the members of multi-religious communities'.[25] He explains the method thus:

> A seminal teaching in the Scriptures of one religion, sown and buried in the texts, when exposed to the warm light that comes from the teachings of another religion's Sacred Writ, sprouts forth and grows into a fruitful source of new insights. In this symbiotic approach, no room is left for diluting or distorting the basic teachings of either religion; and no effort made to indulge in easy equations or odious comparisons.[26]

The exegetical principles envisaged in symbiotic reading are not exclusively Christian. Pieris reminds us that these resonate with the hermeneutical

[24] Pieris, 'Cross-Scripture Reading', p. 244.
[25] Pieris, 'Cross-Scripture Reading', p. 244.
[26] Pieris, 'Cross-Scripture Reading', p. 253.

practices of the Sarvastivada school of Buddhism and the exegetical works of Buddhagosa. To illustrate this method, Pieris analyses the way poverty has been portrayed in the gospel tradition and in the Buddha's teaching on the Fourfold Noble Truths. He notes that there are two kinds of poverty mentioned in two Gospel passages, in Matthew and Luke. Matthew speaks of the spiritually poor – or the voluntarily detached as Pieris defines them (Matt. 5:3) – and Luke describes the poor as the dispossessed (Luke 6:20). The spiritually poor are the renouncers of mammon worship, whereas the dispossessed are its victims. Both the detached and the dispossessed are integral to the liberation proposed in the Gospels and chosen as partners to usher in the reign of God. Pieris observes that there is a similar idea in the use in the Pali Tripitaka text of *appicchata* (the detached ones) and *daliddiya* (the broken or the downtrodden ones). While acknowledging that the biblical teaching does not correspond with the two forms of poverty as envisaged in the Buddhist text, he concedes that there are remarkable similarities between them. In dealing with the social evil of greed, the Tripitaka offers emancipation from private possessions and the elimination of abject poverty. Just as in the case of the Gospels, the Buddhist text teaches that nirvana is intrinsically linked to the eradication of poverty and personal greed. Pieris points out that the Christian and the Buddhist texts agree that economic poverty in itself is not a highly meritorious state, but that the morality the poor exhibit and the ethical life they strive for are far more important. The natural characteristic of such greedlessness is sharing and generosity. In Pieris's view the Buddhist sangha and the Christian church are called to be 'contrast societies' promoting less acquisitive communities. Pieris assures those who see such an interpretation as 'so Christian as to be unbuddhistic', that it is a 'thoroughly Buddhist exegesis of the Pali Scriptures, originating in a biblical reading of it'.[27]

The second new approach is cross-textual reading, as advocated by Archie Lee. He too is challenged by the rich textual tradition of the continent. His contention is that Asian Christian readers do not approach Christian texts with a blank mind. They bring with them a number of religious, social and secular textual traditions. To address this phenomenon, Lee places side by side Chinese classical writings (Text A) and the Hebrew Scriptures (Text B) with a view not only to eliciting a better understanding of the two texts but, more importantly, to addressing the religio-cultural identity of Asians who have been converted to what he calls a non-Asian religion such as Christianity. Lee admits that the Chinese classics and Christian sacred texts have the

[27] Pieris, 'Cross-Scripture Reading', p. 253.

potential to be both liberative and enslaving. The task, then, is to read both texts to expand our horizons. For him, this cross-textual exercise is not merely a meeting of ideas or enhancement of texts, but is also about the transformation of the whole of life and a process of self-discovery for the readers or, as he puts it, borrowing from Richard Wentz, about 'enriched-transformed existence'.[28] A cross-textual reading of the flood narratives in the Hebrew and Chinese traditions is among the many examples worked out by Lee. In this, Lee reads cross-textually the biblical narrative with those of the flood myths of the Naxi, an ethnic minority in China. He focuses on the mythic themes in the structure of flood stories and the conception of the relationship between the divine and the humans in the religious world of the flood narratives and the Naxi myth. In this cross-textual reading Lee demonstrates how the non-Christian Chinese receive and appropriate the biblical flood story and how Christians, in turn, receive and appropriate the Chinese flood myths. There are similarities in the stories. The flood is sent by God to destroy the creation. Escape is provided in both narratives. In one case it is the ark, and in the other the leather drum. Sacrifice is offered as thanksgiving. In both stories the flood stands as the dividing line between the first and the second creation. Where the narratives differ dramatically is when it comes to the dividing line between the human and the divine. In the biblical story the punishment is seen as for overstepping the boundary between the divine and the human. In contrast, in the Chinese myth the aspiration to become divine is not only endorsed but encouraged. A non-Christian Chinese reader, with an eye to the parallel text from the Naxi flood myth, will not read Genesis 6:1–4 as a punishment for human sins but as the regeneration of humanity in the divine–human intermarriage.

The third new approach is the contrapuntal method of reading advocated by post-colonial interpreters. Contrapuntal reading places next to each other the mainstream and the marginal – Christian and non-Christian, secular and sacred, textual and oral – and looks for connections, disagreements and inconsistencies between them, not with a view to imposing artificial amicable alliances, but to achieving a counterpoint of voices which maintains rather than irons out tensions. Such a method is an attempt to go beyond the earlier discredited comparative hermeneutics used by both colonialists and nationalists. The former enlisted it to pass judgement on other peoples' stories and the latter to dismiss Western knowledge as tainted and to project the indigenous

[28] Lee, 'Transformative Readings: Convergence of Scriptural Traditions in Negotiating for Asian Christian Identities', unpublished paper, p. 12.

heritage as ideal and noble. By way of illustration, and drawing on the work of George Soares-Prabhu,[29] we may take as an example a reading of the missionary commands found in Matthew 28:19 and Mahavagga 1.10–11.1. Both these texts belong to narrative contexts and emphasise the importance of the missionary task for their respective communities. In Matthew the missionary command is given by the resurrected Jesus as a culmination of his life and work, whereas the Buddha's commission is narrated as one of the incidents in Buddha's earthly life, and as such is comparable to the commission found in Matthew 10. Buddha's exhortation to preach was not accorded any special importance. Both commissions express identical interests. For both, the authority of the mission is predicated upon the sender. In one case it is the Buddha's authority, and in the other the authority of Jesus; for both, mission involves teaching, communication of religious doctrines and praxis; and both conclude with an assurance of the presence of the sender: 'Lo, I am always with you.'

While there are duplications in the two texts, they also show remarkable differences. In Matthew the mission to preach derives its strength singularly from Jesus: 'All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.' In the Buddhist commission, on the other hand, the authorisation gains credibility because of the liberation attained both by the Buddha himself ('I am delivered from all fetters human and divine') and his disciples ('You, also, O Bhikkus, are delivered from all fetters divine and human'). Phrased differently, the Buddhist mission rests as much on the Enlightenment of the Buddha as on his *bhikku*s. Both masters want their disciples to teach. In the Buddha's case, he wants his followers to preach the *dhamma* – a perfect and pure life of holiness. Matthew's Jesus invites his hearers to be 'perfect as the heavenly father is perfect' (Matt. 5:48). For both the purpose of mission is the liberation of humankind, but they express this differently. The Buddhist text is quite explicit. The monks are sent out 'for the profit of many, for the happiness of many, and out of compassion for the world'. The purpose of the Buddhist mission is the welfare of all, which includes not only humankind but the created order as well. Such a concern and affection is missing in the Matthaean command. The first Gospel is silent about the welfare of the 'nations' to which the disciples are sent out. Matthew's text is not about being of service to the people but about winning adherents, numerical and institutional expansion. The nations are perceived as objects of mission. They have to be baptised and converted. Both the Buddhist and Christian commissions recognise and are mindful of

[29] Soares-Prabhu, 'Two Mission Commands'.

the universal nature of their mission. Matthew makes it clear that the mission is to 'all nations'. The Buddhist commission goes a step further. It does not distinguish between nations but between gods and humans, and is more sensitive to the unity of humankind than to national differences. Finally, the idea of the establishment of Buddhism in a given geographical area with all its implications is absent in the Buddhist command. Unlike in Christianity, there are no instructions or rites from the Buddha for establishing *sasana* (the teaching of the Buddha) in a country. Buddhism is about personal realisation of the truth. Once a person is awakened to the truth, Buddhist ideals are established in that person. The Buddhist history records the disciples of the Buddha going back to their countries and making numerous converts, and the Buddha himself was invited to these countries, but there is no mention of an establishment or institutionalisation of Buddhism. The notion of establishing Buddhism came later, with the conversion of Asoka. It was he who adopted Buddhism as a state religion and sent missionaries with a view to converting nations. The Christian text is about conversion whereas the Buddhist text is about enlightenment. In Christianity it is the person of Jesus who saves, whereas in Buddhism the identical redemptive function is performed by the teaching of the Buddha.

These three approaches – symbiotic, cross-textual and contrapuntal – call for closer scrutiny. For want of space, let me offer a brief assessment of them. What these approaches do is to go beyond the impasse created by the old comparative method. The underlying features of all three methods include maintaining the theological, cultural and historical integrity of the texts and permitting them to speak on their own terms.

There are subtle differences between these methods. Pieris's symbiotic method is largely confined to religious texts, whereas the other two – cross-textual and contrapuntal – are more open and deal with both religious and secular texts. For the 'symbiotic' and 'cross-textual' approaches texts are settled and secure, but for contrapuntal reading texts are not final or finished products but sketchy and on the move. While Pieris and Lee's reading practices aim to arrive at a rounded and in some sense complete meaning, contrapuntal reading strives to acknowledge and uplift the clashing and contradictory voices enshrined in the narratives. What is clear in all three cases is that each text acquires its religious worth through its relationship to the other and obtains its meaning through its connection to another text. In the current multi-textual and multi-religious Asian context, characterised by a variety of texts, concentration on a single text may not facilitate either its appreciation or that of other texts.

The search for the historical Jesus

The Western search for the historical Jesus has often been described as motivated largely by historical questions and driven by Enlightenment ideals such as scepticism, rational inquiry and objectivity. Any approach which deviates from such cherished values is dismissed as confessional and sentimental. Portrayals of Jesus in ethnic, gender or theological terms are deemed to have less academic purchase. Recently, the Western claim for so-called neutrality has come under severe scrutiny and has been exposed not only as confessional but also as nationalistic. The German search, for example, is seen as driven by both national ambitions and racism, and similarly the British search as influenced by Victorian values and colonial impulses.

There are far too many Asian portrayals of Jesus to consider here, and so I highlight four of them because of their distinctive features. One was Keshub Chunder Sen's idea of an Asiatic Christ. His aim was to counter the defamation of Indian character during the period of colonial rule. At a time when Indians were portrayed as effeminate, untrustworthy and uncouth, he skilfully turned the insult to embarrass the colonialists by reconfiguring Jesus as Asiatic, the very figure the colonialists found so repulsive. In the face of such criticism, Indian reformers such as Keshub Chunder Sen (1838–84) and P. C. Moozumdar (1840–1905) highlighted the Asiatic character in Jesus' appearance, manners and customs and his relationships with people. Sen went on to strip Jesus of all Western trappings and to rehabilitate him as 'the true Asiatic Christ, divested of all Western appendages, carrying on the work of redemption among his own people. Behold, he cometh to us in his loose garment, his dress and features altogether oriental, a perfect Asiatic in everything.'[30]

An interesting feature of this quest was to present Jesus not as a unique religious figure, which the Western quest tended to do, but to place him alongside other Asian religious figures. Sen thus tried to locate and recover Jesus within a wider framework which went beyond the traditional Hebraic–Hellenistic schema. His idea was to situate Christ within a universal framework, and to affirm him as one among several Asian religious figures such as Muhammad, Chaitanya, Zoroaster, Sakhya Muni and Confucius, who were engaged in a similar type of work to Jesus. For Sen

> Lives of all such prophets are accepted reverently as God's revelation in history. . . . Each of the prophets came into the world as a messenger of God,

[30] Sen, 'India Asks: Who is Christ?', p. 365.

> bearing a distinct message of glad tidings which he contributed to the cause of religious enlightenment and progress. We must then freely honour all of them, and gratefully accept from each what he has to deliver, instead of binding ourselves as slaves to any particular person as the only chosen prophet of God.[31]

This reconfigured Jesus, who is part of a continuum, owes his existence, for Sen, to the eternal Logos. Sen found in the eternal Logos a convenient concept in which to locate Christ in a wider context. It was this Christ who was 'in Greece and Rome, in Egypt and India. In the bards and the poets of the Rig Veda was he. He dwelt in Confucius and Sakya Muni. This is the true Christ whom I can see everywhere, in all lands and in all times, in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in America, in ancient and modern times.'[32] In case one misinterprets Sen's overenthusiastic endorsement of Jesus, it should be pointed out that his Christ is essentially 'an Asiatic in race, as a Hindu in faith'.[33] In Sen's scheme of theology, Christ has to be understood and appropriated in the context of all great religious prophets and cultures. His message was that Jesus was one of the 'Eastern prophets', and therefore, Sen tells his Indian readership, he is 'entitled to your loyalty and attachment'.[34] While missionaries portrayed Christ as a divine son far removed from human reality, Sen depicted him as a human being immediately identifiable as a kinsman and a brother. As he put it, he is 'the sweetest, the purest, the brightest of our brothers' and is 'our holy brother in flesh'.[35]

Another important portrayal of Jesus to emerge was that of T. C. Chao in his *The Life of Jesus* (1935). This was probably closer to the Western search. Chao himself was trained in the West and was quite familiar with the European quest. His purpose, as he explained in his introduction, was to go beyond the Western hermeneutical conventions and make the biblical accounts easy for the younger generations. More specifically, his search was triggered by his love and admiration for Jesus. His search was undertaken at a time when China was torn apart by warlords and threatened by the Japanese presence. What was needed at that time was a moral vision to revitalise Chinese self-esteem. In Chao's reckoning, Jesus provided this moral vision; his ethical vigour had an impact both on the individual and on society as a whole. Here Chao could have been influenced by the social gospel movement, which was very prominent

[31] Sen, 'Great Men', pp. 86–7.
[32] Sen, 'That Marvellous Mystery', p. 32.
[33] Sen, 'India Asks: Who is Christ?', p. 388.
[34] Sen, 'India Asks: Who is Christ?', p. 389.
[35] Sen, 'That Marvellous Mystery', p. 26.

at that time. What appealed to him was Jesus' humanity. This was so important to Chao that he left out the supernatural events associated with Jesus, such as the virgin birth, resurrection, ascension, last judgement and second coming, though later he modified his views on the virgin birth and the resurrection. It was the ethical dimension of Jesus' religion which established his authority and divinity. For Chao, Jesus attained his divinity through his morality. It was Jesus who provided the perfect standard for all human dealings in such teachings and actions as loving your enemy and turning the other cheek. In other words, Jesus exemplified 'compassion and magnanimity'.

The Japanese novelist Shusaku Endo's (1923–96) quest was motivated by two factors. One was to explain Jesus to a largely non-Christian Japanese audience, and the other was to satisfy the religious mentality of the Japanese. Through this latter the Japanese sought 'in their gods and buddhas a warm-hearted mother rather than a stern father'. With this fact always in mind, Endo explained, 'I tried not so much to depict God in the father-image that tends to characterise Christianity, but rather to depict the kind-hearted maternal aspect of God revealed to us in the personality of Jesus.'[36] The vision that emerges is of Jesus as a maternally caring divine mother – ineffectual, powerless and an eternal companion. What is at the heart of the portrayal is Jesus' vulnerability and not his valorous kingship. When people around him were looking for power and miraculous deeds, he appeared as a man who 'could accomplish nothing, the man who possessed no power in the visible world'. His greatest achievement was that he was never known to have abandoned people if they were in trouble: 'When women were in tears, he stayed by their side. When old folks were lonely, he sat with them quietly. It was nothing miraculous, but the sunken eyes overflowed with love more profound than a miracle.'[37] Endo's Jesus demonstrated love through vulnerability and powerlessness.

The Asian American Rita Nakashima Brock's portrayal of Jesus is driven by two needs: to find glimpses of life-giving potential within biblical texts tainted by patriarchal images; and to go beyond the figure of Jesus as an individual hero fashioned by some of the feminist theologians without departing from what Brock calls 'androcentric realms'.[38] The Jesus she comes out with is not a unilateral liberator 'who receives private revelation of God/dess and proclaims it against all odds',[39] but one who draws on the community so that together, in mutual cooperation, they co-create liberation and healing. She

[36] Endo, *A Life of Jesus*, p. 1.
[37] Endo, *A Life of Jesus*, p. 173.
[38] Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart*, p. 67.
[39] Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart*, p. 65.

relocates 'Jesus in the community of which Jesus is one historical part'[40] so that the community generates the erotic power which heals and thus becomes the locus for redemption. Unlike *agape*, which Brock sees as a disinterested, dispassionate divine love, *eros* is about compassion and collective action. She also replaces the term Christ with Christa/community, a community that generates erotic power which is life-giving and co-creative. She finds such a Jesus in Mark's Gospel. By thus taking the Christ beyond Jesus of Nazareth, she reconfigures a Jesus in whom feminist concerns can be reconciled.

There are certain common interests in Asian and Western searches. Both are in pursuit of an uninterpreted Jesus. Asians see their task as extricating Jesus from Western and European associations, whereas Western enterprise is eager to disentangle Jesus from the labyrinthine textual layers. For both the search for such a historical Jesus is also a quest for Christian selfhood and character. Here the commonalties end. The Asian quest differs on a number of issues and does not address some of the standard Western themes which have dominated the discourse.

For a start, Western searchers devoted their efforts to situating and reconstructing Jesus in his historical context, whereas the Asian search focused on contemporary encounters with and experiences of him. For Asian interpreters the authenticity and legitimacy of Christian faith is determined not necessarily by recovering the historical Jesus but by the ongoing knowledge and understanding of him. Their aim was not to place him firmly in the past but to loose him from his historical moorings and make him trans-historical so that he could live in the present. Asian interpretation of Jesus was shaped partly by early writings on Jesus and partly by Asia's contextual needs. What they were looking for was not the Jesus of 'then' but Jesus of 'now'.

A second difference was that, for Asian interpreters, the Gospels have only a limited historical purchase for recovering the actual Jesus because of their already interpreted nature. For the Asian searchers the narrative value of the Gospels lies in their rich and diverse portrayals of Jesus.

A third was that the Asian quest for Jesus did not see him as the fulfilment of the Hebrew prophecies, but perceived him as one among the numerous illustrious religious figures, as Sen has demonstrated.

Finally, Asians distance themselves from the vexing question of who killed Jesus – Romans or Jews. Shusaku Endo does not place the blame on either side. In his view Jesus suffered for and poured his love out even upon the people who put him to death.

[40] Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart*, p. 69.

The Asian search stands within the Pauline tradition. For Paul, the Christ-experience was paramount, not knowing Jesus in the flesh (2 Cor. 5:16). Similarly, for these Asians the Jesus-experience was vital to their faith rather than the historical, flesh-and-blood Jesus.

Marginal readings

Minjung: readings of the conscientised masses

One of the provocative and challenging theologies to emerge in the 1980s in Asia was South Korean Minjung theology (*Min* = people; *jung* = conscientised masses). This theology was a specific response to the oppressive political situation prevalent in South Korea at that time and the rapid industrialisation which disadvantaged the poor. The starting point for this theology was the Minjung, who were culturally rich but oppressed politically, exploited economically, alienated socially and denied education. They were the custodians of the indigenous culture and historical heritage of the people. This theology emerged as a way of giving a voice to the Minjung. There were a number of attempts to read the Bible in the light of the concerns of the Minjung and, along with Korean cultural resources, the Bible provided an important source. Although the Minjung theology has evolved over the years, the early work done on the Bible remains innovative. Here are two illustrations.

The first was Ahn Byung Mu's rereading of the *ochlos* in Mark.[41] Using the traditional historical-critical method, Ahn Byung Mu rereads Mark's Gospel from a Minjung perspective. His contention is that mainstream biblical scholarship has paid little attention to the socio-economic milieu in which Jesus undertook his work, and has also failed to identify the social background of the crowds associated with Jesus. In his study of *ochlos* (the crowd) in Mark, Ahn has demonstrated that Mark deliberately avoided using *laos*, a favourite term for Luke, which meant religious people, the people of God. Instead, he chose *ochlos*, indicating a group who were abandoned and marginalised: the sinners, the tax collectors and the sick. In other words, *ochlos* were the alienated, dispossessed and powerless, simply the Minjung. Jesus accepted this group unconditionally. *Ochlos*, for Ahn, is not a fixed identity but a fluid one which is defined in a relational way. In this sense one cannot understand Jesus without the *ochlos* and vice versa. Jesus' messiahship was exercised in his identification with the suffering of the Minjung.

[41] Ahn, 'Jesus and the Minjung'.

The second example comes from Cyrus Moon. Unlike most Korean interpreters Moon does not see easy parallels between twentieth-century Korea and first-century Palestine. His exegesis is much more nuanced. He starts with the premise that the contemporary Korean situation and the historical situations of biblical times are not similar. His contention is that the liberation theology espoused by Moses in the Exodus narrative cannot be simply applied to the current Korean Minjung. One big difference between the two situations is that modern Korea is not under the occupation of a foreign ruler as in the case of the Israelites. True, Korea was under Japanese occupation, but that was decades ago. The present oppressors are the Korean people themselves, the so-called ruling class. Acknowledging this difference, Cyrus Moon nevertheless concedes that there is some sort of resemblance between Micah's time (the eighth century BCE) and the twentieth century because the Korean Minjung are exploited and have little control over their destiny. In looking at Micah, Moon argues that Micah's division of the people of his nation into two categories – 'my people' and 'this people' – provides a clue to the current situation. In Micah's usage 'my people' were 'the have-nots, the victims of social injustice', oppressed and exploited by 'this people', who were not foreigners but the ruling class and part of the same society. It was 'this people' who 'had taken houses and land from the poor by physical force and coercion'.[42] In Moon's view there is a telling distinction between the liberative message of the Exodus and the prophetic message of Micah. The former is about freedom from oppressive foreign powers, whereas the latter is about the judgement of the dominant class, which oppresses its own people. Micah, as a commoner, identified himself with the oppressed and championed their cause and suffered for them, prefiguring the suffering of Christ for the oppressed. Moon's inference is that in all the liberative acts of God in Korea, one can see the suffering of Christ.

Burakumin*: the thorn in the Japanese crown*

The *burakumin* are a part of Japanese society whose presence challenges the monolithic picture of Japan. They are the most ostracised of people, and there are 3 million of them. They are not part of the Japanese success story. Discrimination against them is not based on race, but determined largely by the type of 'mean and filthy' work they do. They are the outcastes who were assigned to deal with dead bodies, butchering and tanning. Such

[42] Moon, 'An Old Testament Understanding of Minjung', p. 132.

discrimination is based on Shinto and Buddhist ideas of pollution and purity. *Buraku* means 'special village' and *min* means 'people'. *Burakumin* means people from specially designated villages. The origin of the *burakumin* remains a mystery, but the formalisation of their status can be traced to the Edo period (1603–1867). It was during this time that, under strict military rule, Japanese society was stratified. At the top were the Samurai, the warriors, followed by farmers, artisans, craftspeople, traders and shopkeepers. The Edo rulers realised that in order to sustain this hierarchy they needed an underclass which would allow the commercial class to think that they were not the lowest of the low. So the *burakumin* were created and placed on the bottom rung of society. In the early days they were associated with leatherwork, shoemaking and dealing with dead bodies. In parallel with the Indian untouchables, *burakumin* were sometimes called *eta*, meaning dirty, or, at worst, as *hinin*, which meant non-people. As the years went by most people forgot why the *burakumin* were originally considered inferior, so the areas they lived in rather than their occupation became their descriptor.

The Christians among the *burakumin*, who face discrimination both in society and in the church, have found resources in the biblical tradition to recover their self-identity and self-worth. Tero Kuribayashi, who himself is a *buraku*, has recovered the biblical symbol of the crown of thorns. The choice was symbolic and deliberate. The crown of thorns was chosen with a view to contrasting it with the Japanese imperial crown of chrysanthemums. For Kuribayashi it has a double significance: humiliation and triumph. Traditionally, Jesus' crown of thorns, in Kuriyabashi's view, signified 'mockery, humiliation and dishonour', but 'Paul, however, saw in Jesus' crown of thorns the exaltation that was the ultimate outcome of his humiliation'.[43] Kuribayashi writes: 'But for Paul as well as for the people of the early church, Jesus' crown, together with the cross was a symbol of victory.'[44] A symbol which was seen as the supreme example of endurance, devotion and piety has been turned into a symbol of God's solidarity with the rejected and despised of the world. Jesus' historical cause for the poor and the oppressed has become a symbol that both points to the pain of the marginalised and reveals the hope of their final victory. Another Japanese scholar, Hisako Kayama, has pointed out that the story of Cornelius with its potential overtones of pollution/purity is a story which a Japanese *burakumin* could easily identify with. His plea is that just as Peter was 'transformed through the vision and encounter with Cornelius',[45] so

[43] Kuribayashi, 'Recovering Jesus', p. 16.
[44] Kuribayashi, 'Recovering Jesus', p. 16.
[45] Kayama, 'The Cornelius Story', p. 194.

Japanese society, which is bedevilled with the purity–impurity divide, should be transformed by its encounter with the *burakumin*.

Indigenous Peoples: reclaiming the land

Those people once known as Tribals, Aborigines or Primitive People now go under the name of Indigenous Peoples. These are mainly peripheral people who, as the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous People put it, 'today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic and cultural customs and traditions than with the institutions of the country of which they now form part'. Asia has the highest number of Indigenous Peoples, and a large majority of them live in China and India.

Christians among the Indigenous Peoples find the dominant biblical interpretation failing to address their concerns, which are more ecological than theological. Wati Longchar, an indigene of north-east India, contends that both missionaries and mainstream biblical scholarship overlook the main concerns of Indigenous Peoples. Missionaries, in his view, introduced anthropocentric reading which emphasised the revelation of God through the written word and through the person of Jesus, thus undermining the divine revelation through the natural created order. Mainstream Asian scholars, on the other hand, spend most of their energies relating the biblical texts to the religious texts of Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs in order to clarify and build communal harmony, but paying little attention to the realities of the indigenous peoples. Longchar thinks that both missionaries and mainstream Asian interpreters had a condescending attitude towards Indigenous Peoples' earth-centred religion, culture and ethics. The missionaries were dismissive of the religious fervour of the indigenous as 'devilish', whereas mainstream Asian scholars were disrespectful towards their spirituality as 'not philosophically deep enough to interpret the Bible'.[46] The interpretative process of the Indigenous Peoples is totally different. What disrupts the lives of the Indigenous Peoples is alienation from 'mother earth . . . in which their personhood, spirituality, and identity are inseparably rooted'.[47] The sense of injustice Indigenous Peoples experienced arose from economic poverty, unemployment, or disease, and these were all as a result of being alienated from the land. The starting point for reading the Bible, therefore, is the land, which is 'the point of reference and key to understanding human self-hood, God and spirit'.[48] The harmony in

[46] Longchar, 'Reading the Bible', p. 51.
[47] Longchar, 'Reading the Bible', p. 52.
[48] Longchar, 'Reading the Bible', p. 54.

and within the space is the first step towards gaining liberation. When justice is done to the land and harmony is achieved, then the well-being of creatures and the created order are established. Longchar remarks that such a harmonious existence is envisioned by the Psalmist (96:11, 12). For all marginalised people the ultimate aim of hermeneutics is to gain dignity, recover their rights and re-establish their identity.

Dalit*s: reading themselves out of the stigma*

One of the new words to enter the public discourse is *dalit*. This is the self-designated term chosen by those Indians who were once known as 'outcastes', 'untouchables', 'depressed classes' or '*harijans*'. The *dalit*s, nearly 15 per cent of the Indian population, find themselves placed at the bottom of what is known as the caste system. Their marginalisation was due to the fact that they were seen by traditional Hindu society as ritually impure, the inherited stigma continuing to reinforce their inferior status. The *dalit*s have rejected the earlier labels, which they found paternalistic and insulting, especially Gandhi's label, *harijan*s. They chose for themselves the term *dalit* – a term first used by Jhotirao Phule to describe their actual reality. There is uncertainty about the etymological origins of the word. Some trace it to the Sanskritic root, which aptly describes both the abject state of the *dalit*s and the potential to blossom into wholeness. The adjective *dalita* means split, broken, destroyed, crushed, trampled upon; but the noun *dala* means something unfolding into fullness. There are others who trace the contemporary usage to the Marathi word *dala*, which means 'of the soil' or 'of the earth', 'that which is rooted in the soil'. Whatever the root meaning, the term has been appropriated to describe both the stigmatised status of the *dalit*s and their latent capacity to blossom.

The Indian church is unfortunately not exempt from the pervading influence of the caste system. The *dalit*s have profitably employed a number of biblical images and characters mirroring their plight and degradation. The chief among these is the image of the suffering servant – the figure of Jesus as the one 'wounded for our transgressions'. For the *dalit*s Jesus as a suffering leader resonates with the *dalit* state of servitude and suffering. The other image is the Psalmist's reference to a 'worm not human' which is indicative of their depressed state. Another image is that of the biblical shepherd. James Massey points out that the image of a shepherd offers contradictory signals. On the one hand, shepherds in the Bible were described as 'abhorrent' (Gen. 46:34); shepherds – like the *dalit*s – were employees without any contract (Gen. 31:41), and were always on the move because any permanent 'habitations of shepherds' was seen as a disastrous threat to those in cities. On the

other hand, the Bible records the profession of the shepherd as one of the oldest, going back to Adam's son Abel. Most of the patriarchs are identified as shepherds. Among the Israelite kings, King David, from whom Jesus was said to have been descended, was a shepherd. An image used in the Bible for God is that of a shepherd. With these paradoxical views, Massey revisits Luke's account of the angels announcing the birth of the Messiah (2:8–20) and extracts two hermeneutical insights: first, it was to the shepherds that the message of salvation was first announced; and second, it was in a manger that the saviour was born – 'a place of their level'. Thus, the shepherds – the excluded – become the 'first favoured group/community'.[49]

Recently Maria Arul Raja has engaged in an inter-textual study of biblical texts and the *dalit* world and their experience with a view not only to empowering the *dalit*s but also that they may recapture their respectability. In his study Arul Raja juxtaposes two murdered warrior-heroes: Jesus and the South Indian Mathurai Veeran. Both defied the unjust norms of the ruling elite – casteism in the case of Mathurai Veeran, and authoritarianism and ritualism in the case of Jesus. Both died as wounded heroes and were later elevated to divine status by their respective communities as an act of rectification or reparation for injustices done to them. 'By venerating his [Mathurai Veeran's] memory as a protector God', writes Arul Raja, 'the Dalit community seeks to retrieve their original identity as brave warriors with a sense of discerning for themselves what is right and what is wrong.'[50] Arul Raja's contention is that the defeat and death of the murdered heroes was transformed into a 'weapon of the weak' and used as a springboard to 'evolve new ethical alternatives'.

Surekha Nelavala provides a *dalit* woman's perspective in her engagement with Mark's account of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24–31). She challenges the text 'to respond to the particular oppressions suffered by Dalits and particularly Dalit women within the casteistic context'.[51] She juxtaposes her own autobiographical narrative with Mark's account of the Syro-Phoenician woman and detects exceptional parallels between the two. In both cases the women were outside the mainstream, a *dalit* in one case and a Gentile in the other. Both were polite in their approach and had an open encounter with a male figure. Initially both met with rejection and humiliation. Where the Syro-Phoenician woman differed from Nelavala's own experience was that, in the end, the biblical character was not only smart and persistent enough to

[49] Massey, 'Introduction to our Liberative Traditions', p. 45.
[50] Arul Raja, 'Breaking Hegemonic Boundaries', p. 108.
[51] Nelavala, 'Smart Syrophoenician Woman', p. 64.

get what she was after but also in the process was instrumental in rectifying the mistaken attitude of Jesus. Nelavala's reading is refreshingly different in one respect. Unlike the other feminist readings she does not overemphasise the wit and the verbal victory of the woman over Jesus. While acknowledging the liberative potential the Syro-Phoenician woman's story has for women, what is so striking about her, for Nelavala, is that she is able to change some of the inherent biases of Jesus. The implication of the encounter is that 'without the oppressor's readiness to change, the voice of the oppressed is in vain'.[52] Phrased differently, a complete liberation ultimately depends on the oppressed and the oppressor working in tandem. A similar hermeneutical insight was expressed by M. Gnanavaram. In his exegesis of the Good Samaritan parable Gnanavaram sees the Samaritan – the marginalised *dalit* figure – and victimised traveller as one in their struggle to achieve liberation. One without the other makes the liberation look shallow.[53]

Asian women, biblical women

Asian women from various contexts have used their experience, cultural insights and indigenous religious texts to open up the biblical texts, while others have critically and profitably used historical-critical methods in their engagement with biblical texts. Satoko Yamaguchi has drawn on critical feminist theories to rehabilitate two biblical characters – Martha and Mary – whose roles have been obscured and downplayed in the fourth Gospel. In spite of the fact that their stories were locked into a 'kyriarchal', a master-centred paradigm, Yamaguchi offers a revised reading of them as not wealthy but as humble women who 'made the best' of Jesus, expressing 'their solidarity with their beloved teacher and friend'.[54] Both biblical characters emerge as models of active discipleship, and possibly as potential prophets. Her hermeneutical aim is to retell the stories in a way which can assist in re-visioning Christian identities. In the work of Hisako Hinukawa the culture of honour and shame, which is found in both Japan and Palestine, with its distinctive characteristic of group solidarity and dyadic personality, provides a new perspective from which to read Mark's Gospel.[55] Some women interpreters incorporate religious and cultural stories of their ancestors to reformulate and reconstitute their identity. One such attempt is made by the Vietnamese

[52] Nelavala, 'Smart Syrophoenician Woman', p. 66.
[53] Gnanavaram, '"Dalit Theology" and the Parable of the Good Samaritan'.
[54] Yamaguchi, *Mary and Martha*, p. 141.
[55] Kinukawa, *Women and Jesus in Mark*.

American Mai-Anh Le Tran to interweave stories from two different cultural worlds – Jewish and Vietnamese. She juxtaposes three female characters – two from the Hebrew Scriptures – Lot's wife and Ruth, and one from a Vietnamese folk tradition, a young wife called Tho Thi. Two are turned into pillars – one of salt (Lot's wife) and the other of stone (Tho Thi). Ruth was made into a 'pillar of redemption' for her loyalty and self-sacrifice. Tran challenges the way these three female characters have been textualised and their actions interpreted as a patronising celebration of their 'gentle and gracious womanhood'. Tran sees them as Han-ridden women and full of defiance. In her view these stories 'demand a different understanding of divine and human justice'.[56]

Minority hermeneutics thrives on victimhood. The examples here are no exception. The discourse is replete with phrases such as 'doubly-oppressed' and 'triply-oppressed'. While these labels rightly reflect injury and stigma, the danger is that these descriptors may stiffen into a creed and hinder progress. Minority hermeneutics has been successful in exposing the tyrannical features of the powerful, but it has yet to analyse the oppression that goes on within its own fold. Those who belong to the margins of society often invent a re-actionary identity which is idealised or rooted in the mythological past. Marginal hermeneutics is essentially about empowering. When *dalits*, *burakumin*, Asian women and Tribals read the Bible, their aim is not only to seek historical insights in the texts, but to find liberative resources which will confront and challenge the oppressive forces and at the same time empower them to regain their dignity.

New developments

Post-colonial readings

Post-colonial biblical criticism first made its appearance in the 1990s, and gradually became a major player in shaping the discipline. Although post-colonial criticism originated in English departments, its arrival in biblical studies was facilitated by a number of factors. One was the momentum provided by those in various departments of humanity engaged in the recuperation of the history of the colonised and the coloniser in the aftermath of colonialism. Such an introspection challenged the way in which texts and knowledge were produced and interpreted. The Christian Bible and biblical interpretation were

[56] Tran, 'Lot's Wife, Ruth, and To Thi', p. 132.

natural candidates for such an examination on two counts: (a) most biblical narratives came out of ancient colonial contexts and enshrined colonial tendencies; and (b) the Christian Bible and biblical interpretation played a pivotal role in modern colonialism. A second factor was the stagnation of Latin American liberation hermeneutics and its failure to take note of the post-colonial reality of multiculturalism. Liberation hermeneutics has, rightly, locked itself into an economic agenda, but in doing so has overlooked the diverse religious and cultural traditions of the people. Its close association with two biblical prototypes – the salvation-history model and the prophetic tradition – was not always sympathetic to those who were part of indigenous or pluralistic cultures. The employment of a sacred-history event such as the Exodus was harmful to the native people, as it was to the biblical Canaanites. Liberation theologians were also wedded to the idea of the prophetic call for social justice. However laudable this was, the prophetic vision was partial and limited. The Hebrew prophets had little time for ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. They espoused the ideals of monoculturalism and a monotheistic god which were detrimental to plurality and diversity. In addition, liberation theologians were in thrall to both the authoritative and liberative role of the Bible, thus overlooking its unsavoury aspects. While finding textual support for fighting against economic oppression and exploitation, liberation hermeneutics failed to note the support, approval and furtherance of empire and imperial values enshrined in several biblical narratives. A third factor was the impetus provided by the presence of a large contingent of interpreters from Asia, Africa and Latin America in the West, especially in North America, who were looking for a reading practice other than those prevailing in the West, which did not address their new-found political freedom and cultural confidence. A fourth factor was the emergence of new forms of colonialism which replaced the earlier territorial type, with a struggle for Western ideas and values.

The characteristics of post-colonial biblical criticism are: placing empire at the centre of biblical narratives; unveiling the dominant views and reclaiming silenced voices in the text; challenging interpretations which collude with power; recovering resistant readings of the once colonised; and reading the text from post-colonial concerns such as migration, asylum-seeking and religious fundamentalism. Post-colonialism's main task is to go beyond the contrastive East/West, evangeliser/evangelised categories and to forge an identity which will be mutually transformative.

Post-colonial biblical criticism has made its mark in several ways. The first has been to expose how Western biblical scholars perpetuate Orientalising

tendencies in biblical scholarship. Biblical scholars were no exception when it came to fixing, codifying and structuring the Orient. There are a number of examples of biblical scholars re-Orientalising the Orient. To give one example, the Acts of the Apostles records an incident (Acts 16:13–40) where Paul and Silas are put in prison at the instigation of the owners of a slave girl who has a spirit of divination. While in prison, Paul and Silas are praying and singing when there is a sudden earthquake which makes the foundations of the prison shake. As a result, the doors are opened and the chains of the prisoners loosened. To the surprise of the jailer, no prisoner escapes. Commenting on this incident, E. M. Blaiklock, using the words of William Ramsay, comes up with an answer which is an example of 'pure' Orientalism. The reason the prisoners did not try to escape was because the 'excitable oriental people' lacked 'the northern self-centred tenacity of purpose and presence of mind'.[57] The implication is that the Orientals are mercurial, emotional, impetuous and not capable of taking initiative.

Secondly, post-colonial criticism has been successful in retrieving the resistance writings of the colonised. Some of the examples we saw in the first part of this chapter were the classic cases of 'natives' who questioned and challenged the colonialist discourse. People like Rammohun Roy, J. C. Kumarappa and Hong Xiuquan were not passive recipients but producers of counter-narratives which provided alternative forms of representation.

Thirdly, post-colonial biblical criticism has made its mark in reading the text in a post-colonial context. One such reading was undertaken by Philip Chia at the time when Hong Kong was about to enter the post-colonial era. He was drawn to post-colonial criticism not because it was 'a new toy of the literary approach' or that it was replacing earlier categories such as 'Third World theology' or 'Asian Theology', but because it was for him a 'matter of life experience'.[58] In his reading of the book of Daniel, Chia finds the experiences of the Hong Kong people resonating with those described in Daniel. The well-known fourfold strategy of the coloniser recorded in the book – segregation, language, education and naming – were all replicated in colonial Hong Kong. The common practice of the coloniser was to select and separate the colonised elite, transform them through the introduction of a new language, re-educate them, and, as a final act of domination, provide them with new names. Just as Daniel and his friends were renamed with Chaldean names, so were the many Chinese who changed their names under British rule and education. 'One of

[57] Blaiklock, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 127.
[58] Chia, 'On Naming the Subject', p. 171.

the agonizing features in the search for identity of the colonized', Chia writes, 'is the naming of oneself as the subject/object of/by the colonizer.'[59] Such an act simultaneously affirms and dishonours the colonised. Daniel was not an acquiescent victim. His political critique and act of resistance became evident when he refused to accept food from the royal table. This was not only a dissident gesture but also a 'challenge to the colonizer's claim of life-controlling power'.[60] In Chia's view 'the experience of Daniel is too much of a common experience of the colonized, say for those who experienced the British colonial rule, and subsequent neocolonial rule'.[61]

Post-colonialism, like any other theoretical category, has its share of faults and weaknesses. To name a few: privileging Western colonialism as a marker for defining history and culture which ignores and does injustice to indigenous cultures which thrived even before the advent of modern colonialism; the exclusive focus on writings in English, thus overlooking vernacular, resistant literature; and the failure to reach the grassroots level. Nevertheless, post-colonialism is a useful tool. It makes scholars vigilant about how they conceive and dispense knowledge. It questions the unipolar world which places the West at the centre. More importantly, learning from the past experiences of colonialism, it provides insights and warnings when the contemporary world is faced with new versions of colonialism in the form of globalisation, a market economy and invasion of other countries in the name of liberal interventionism.

Diasporic readers

Another new arrival on the scene is the diasporic interpretation facilitated by movements of people – a sign of the modern world. The presence of a sizeable number of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian, Filipino and Vietnamese in the West, and in particular in North America, has given birth to what is now known as Asian American biblical hermeneutics. Those who are engaged in such an enterprise are a mixture of second- or third-generation Asian Americans and newly arrived professional migrants located largely in Western academies. As an identity marker, the designation Asian American functions as a blanket term reflecting the variety of Asia's nationalities, religions and languages, but at the same time it blocks out the inherent differences within

[59] Chia, 'On Naming the Subject', p. 181.
[60] Chia, 'On Naming the Subject', p. 179.
[61] Chia, 'On Naming the Subject', p. 181.

these communities. Asian American biblical hermeneutics emerged in the late 1990s in the form of edited works which demonstrate both the variety and range of their hermeneutical work. Like most hermeneutical movements, Asian American hermeneutics is not a homogeneous entity. It incorporates a wide variety of ethnic experiences and records numerous views on the Bible. This varies from a wholesale adoption of biblical tenets to complicating, and at times rejecting, the Bible in favour of other life-enhancing sources such as, for instance, the praxis of Jesus advocated by Leng Leroy Lim[62] or – by several interpreters – ancestral wisdom. As a recognizable and distinct corpus Asian American hermeneutics is relatively new. It is too early to evaluate this emerging work, though, in a short period, and taking advantage of the interpreters' dual status, it has come up with refreshing readings of biblical characters buried deep in the narratives, and has unearthed biblical events which were otherwise overlooked by the mainstream.

Surveying the literature, it is evident that Asian American hermeneutics is passing through a series of phases. An earlier, integrative phase has now given way to one of pointed questions both about biblical texts and about the interpreters' own self-identity. In an attempt to project themselves as an amiable and accommodative immigrant community in an often hostile foreign land, the earlier generation of Asian Americans sought out biblical figures such as Ruth as ideal inspirational foreigners. Sometimes the risky actions of Esther were recalled as a warning to be vigilant in a foreign country. Esther, living in an alien land as part of a subjugated and marginalised community, succeeds in concealing her Jewish identity, but reclaims it when the existence of her people comes under threat. Her story is employed as a reminder that Asian Americans might prosper and present themselves as a pliable community denying their Asianness, but when subtle discriminatory decrees continue to threaten the community they should, like Esther, be prepared to take 'risky actions that break decorum'.[63] Sometimes figures once enlisted as powerful role models are interrogated for their continued usefulness. One such heroine was Jael, hailed as a woman warrior. Ten years after her initial enthusiasm, Gale Yee poses a series of sharp questions about the role of Jael: how does her ethnicity influence her status as a woman warrior? As an ethnic figure, whose ideological interest was she serving? Was she the fifth columnist working for the invading Israelites? What happened to her ethnicity in the subsequent narration of her story?[64] Sometimes historical parallels are sought between the Asian American

[62] Lim, '"The Bible Tells me to Hate Myself"'.
[63] Sano, 'Shifts in Reading the Bible', p. 108.
[64] Yee, 'Yin/Yang is Not Me'.

experience in America and that of the biblical communities. One such parallel is 1 Peter's community in Asia Minor and the nineteenth-century Protestant Chinese community in San Francisco. Both communities were resident aliens who found that embracing a new religion increased their marginalisation and discrimination rather than bringing any relief. The Chinese were further marginalised because of their distinctive physical features, their dress codes and hairstyles. Faced with hostility from both Christian churches and from their own communities, these Chinese Christians formed a mutual self-help society, Zhengdaohui, which was based on Christian discipleship rather than on traditional Chinese family ties and village connections. This achievement of solidarity and communal identity was, in Russell Moy's view, the fulfilment of the Petrine vision. He further claims that such a race- and religion-related marginalisation will be of help in understanding the plight of the sojourners in 1 Peter. Moy also points out that what was fascinating about the nineteenth-century Protestant Chinese was that in their study of the Bible they never saw any resemblances between their plight and that of the sojourners described in 1 Peter.[65]

One of the issues addressed by Asian American hermeneutics is a question which hardly comes up in any other hermeneutics: intercultural adoption. The substantial number of Asian American adoptees leads Mary Foskett, herself an adoptee, to examine two biblical narratives, Exodus 2:1–2 and Romans 8 and 9, as a way of exploring the issues. In this Exodus narrative Moses eventually realises that he is not an Egyptian but an Israelite. Foskett notes that as the narrative stands at the redacted level, the story of the adoption of the Hebrew-born Egyptian Moses is submerged in the overarching story of God's triumph and the liberation of the Israelites. In her view the narrative glosses over any constructive assessment of Moses' formative years, and furthermore it accords as much textual space to the killing of the Egyptian as to the verification of Moses' self-identity and portrays him as the leader of his people. In doing so the text 'reinforces the notion that intercultural adoption signifies, at worst, a betrayal of one's own origins, and at best, a dislocation that can only be corrected by a return to one's "true identity"'.[66] In contrast to the images of adoption in Exodus 2, Foskett finds the spiritual adoption envisaged by Paul in Romans 8 and 9 offering more rounded images which do not erase race or ethnicity. In Paul's vision believers are being instituted into an

[65] Moy, 'Resident Aliens of the Diaspora'.
[66] Foskett, 'Accidents of Being', p. 141.

adoptive relationship with God based on the exemplary adoptive bond that exists between Christ and God, where origins are not lost, but a newly found identity is forged. What is crucial to Paul is 'not what believers have been, but what they have become and are becoming'.[67]

What Asian American biblical hermeneutics has done is to move the focus from the narrative to the identity of the interpreter. Every writer begins by declaring his or her racial, ethnic and social location. These hyphenated identities have become a rich resource for illuminating the texts. Much of their exegetical work has benefited from liberationist, feminist and post-colonial insights. Their theoretical vision is framed and enabled by the writings of Edward Said, Rey Chow and Amy Ling, to name a few. Asian American biblical scholars constantly face the radicalised landscape of American Orientalism and nationalism. Mainstream America already has a fixed idea of what an Asian is, and the temptation is to play to that scripted role. As a minority community they also have the experience of being dehumanised by white racist America. The internment of ethnic Japanese in North America during the Second World War and the series of anti-Chinese and Filipino immigration laws are examples of this American nationalism. What is clear in such circumstance is that integration is not attractive. At the same time, it is too easy to feign and seek security in a fake Asianness.

The Asian American interpreters are engaged in a constant negotiation and translation between the homes they have left behind and the new home they are trying to settle in. In this negotiation, as several of the interpreters have noticed, they face the embarrassment of double rejection: being rejected by the host country as not being Asian enough, and scorned by the cultures they left behind as being too Western and co-optive. Much worse is the reception within their own study programmes, where Asian American religious studies are 'simply ignored or, worse, vilified'.[68] There are signs in their writings that Asian Americans would like to move beyond the traditional preoccupations with ethnic identity and would like to be part of the American Christian story. This largely depends on the kind of politics that prevails in America and the kind of spiritual and social fabric it can offer. The question is what America can possibly offer spiritually to these disaporic scholars who come from countries such as China, India, Japan and Korea, which were the veritable birthplace of every imaginable religious tenet of humankind.

[67] Foskett, 'Accidents of Being', p. 142.
[68] Wan, 'Betwixt and Between', p. 144.

Concluding observations

Asian biblical scholars have been active in addressing a number of hermeneutical issues which affect them. Issues related to plurality of texts, identity and agency have been given scholarly attention. One of the critical questions which face them, however, has hardly been addressed: biblical monotheism. The monotheism of the Bible is a problem in a continent which brims with gods and goddesses. Most Asian Christians either previously belonged to one of the polytheistic faiths which flourish in Asia or live among those communities whose worldview is polytheistic. People today are complex and multifaceted, drawing from a large pool of religious, cultural and ideological alternatives in order to forge and determine their identities. Moreover, for many there is no longer a fixed centre holding everything together. In such a scenario can one go on affirming monotheistic ideals which stand for a single perspective and reality? Monotheism suppresses diversity and ignores the possibility of many centres. The biblical understanding of Yahweh as a single god to be worshipped was a late entrant in the history of Israel. To use the colourful phrase of Karen Armstrong, Yahweh had been a 'member of the Divine Assembly of the "holy ones"',[69] and the Israelites continued to worship a multitude of holy beings until the time of the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE. Asian interpreters need to revisit this critical issue. What is advocated is not a return to the veneration of a host of deities but an exploration of the polytheistic spirit which promotes tolerance, generosity and mutual coexistence.

The visibility of Asian biblical scholars in the international scene in recent years has been remarkable. But their contribution is limited to the hermeneutical issues confined to narrow Asian or Asian American concerns. Asian biblical interpreters have yet to make their mark in the Jesus Seminar, the study of the Gnostic Gospels and biblical archaeology. They can raise issues and bring new perspectives which have not hitherto been registered by those who work in these fields.

On surveying biblical interpretation it is very clear that the highly cherished Protestant principle, Scripture alone, has little purchase in Asia. The Reformers' claim that the Scripture is all-sufficient and is the sole truth is untenable in a continent which teems with a variety of textual traditions. What is more, it would be harmful. Asian interpretation has shown that when an Asian Christian reads the Bible he or she does not read the Bible alone,

[69] Armstrong, *The Bible*, p. 16.

but always reads it with something else. It has always been the Bible plus the Bhagavad-Gita, the Dhammapada, the Analects. The Christian Bible needs to be illuminated by other textual traditions in order to gain credibility.

In the former colonies the Christian Bible has a contaminated image which is not entirely due to its association with modern colonialism. The fault lies in the Bible itself, partly because of the innate colonial impulses enshrined in some of its narratives and partly because of the colonial mindset through which these narratives were expounded by some Western interpreters. But Asian interpreters, from the time when modern colonialism first introduced the Bible, have refused to accept the Bible or its interpretation as presented to them. In the hands of Asian biblical interpreters its sacredness, universality and canonicity have been vigorously questioned. Phrased differently, the status of the Christian Bible as an unsurpassed spiritual source has been questioned.

Finally, biblical interpretation is undertaken in a continent where gospel and church are not in charge, and Asian societies and cultures do not depend on Christian values for their good governance or development. The Christian Bible plays only a marginal role in Asia. Unlike in the West, where it is a pre-eminent cultural authority, in Asia the Bible is one of many textual authorities. The task then is not to clamour for its unique authority or to call for it to be made the foundational document, but to help Asia move towards a post-scriptural world liberated from the authority of all sacred scriptures. This task becomes urgent at a time when religious fundamentalists of all religions resort to their respective scriptures to justify their hatred against others.

24

The Bible in Europe

DAVID THOMPSON

It is a commonplace that the development of printing and the translation of the Bible into the vernacular facilitated the spread of the Protestant Reformation. But the idyllic picture of a bible in every cottage needs to be examined critically. Elizabeth Eisenstein has shown that initially Catholic printers were as keen as Protestants to print vernacular translations of the Bible, and the earliest in the fifteenth century were in Italian and German (later stopped by the Catholic authorities who feared the accompanying notes and comments as much as the translations themselves). Moreover, both in England and Germany, however much the vernacular translations may have stimulated the desire to learn to read, those who could read remained a minority – and an overwhelmingly middle-class minority. Bob Scribner emphasised that Protestantism spread in Germany as much through the visual propaganda of woodcuts and oral culture as through books, quoting Luther himself: 'I thought it good to put the old Passional with the little prayer book, above all for the sake of children and simple folk, who are more easily moved by pictures and images to recall divine history than through mere words or doctrines.'[1] Thus, although Erasmus famously hoped that 'the plowman wold singe a texte of the scripture at his plowbeme And that the wever at his lowme with this wold drive away the tediousness of tyme' – words apparently echoed by Tyndale in his discussion with 'a learned man' when he said, 'I wyl cause a boye that dryveth y^{e} plough, shall knowe more of the scripture then thou doest' – these aspirations should not be confused with the facts.[2] Although the English Reformers

[1] Eisenstein, *Printing Press*, vol. 1, pp. 329–67 (late medieval England may have been unusual in forbidding translations such as those associated with Lollardy); Eisenstein, *Printing Revolution*, esp. pp. 102–20 and 164–208; Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk*, pp. 1–14.

[2] Erasmus, *An Exhortation to the Diligent Studye of Scripture Made by Erasmus Roterdamus And Translated into Inglissh* (Antwerp: J. Hoochstraten, 1529); J. Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (London: n.p., 1563), p. 514, both quoted in Daiches, *The King James Version*, pp. 77, 2.

encouraged people to read the Bible, Ian Green noted that they 'lacked a clear or consistent policy on how to secure this'.[3] There were no systematic attempts to expand the provision of elementary education or to require people to buy bibles, such as happened in some other European Protestant states. The expansion of bible production owed more to printers' initiatives than to increased demand, but the capital costs were considerable and royal licences were as much a guarantee of a market as an ecclesiastical tool.

Martin Luther began to translate the Bible into German in 1521, but did not finish until 1532; in 1525 Jacob van Liesveldt of Antwerp printed a complete Dutch bible, using translations from the Vulgate to fill the gaps in Luther's translation; the Zurich New Testament of 1524 and the complete Bible of 1529 printed by Christopher Froschauer were based on Luther's translations; Peter Olivétan's French translation of 1535 for the Waldensians became the basis for many French translations; William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament and most of the Old (1536) provided the basis for later English versions but Miles Coverdale produced the first complete translation, even though very little of the translation was original to him.[4] Nevertheless, although many of these men subsequently identified themselves with the Protestant Reformation, to talk as though this was inevitable in the 1520s and early 1530s is premature.

Most English bibles were imported from continental Europe in the sixteenth century: Tyndale's New Testament cost 3 shillings, which, though not cheap, was significantly less expensive than the Lollard Testaments had been. Henry VIII, after apparently licensing the 'Matthew' English translation in 1537, had decided by 1543 that it was too dangerous to allow people to read the Bible in private, leading to the oft-quoted lament of the (surely unusual) Gloucestershire shepherd who bought Langley's *Abridgement of Polydore Vergil* in 1546 when his New Testament was confiscated, 'I pray god Amende that blyndness.'[5] The advances of Edward VI's reign were reversed by Mary, so it was only under Elizabeth that new initiatives began. But the Bishops' Bible (1568) was undersold by the Geneva Bible (1560), the first version to introduce verses, which was in pocket-size editions; this had been initiated by Marian exiles in Geneva, and contained annotations, later thought to be subversive

[3] Green, *Print and Protestantism*, p. 44.

[4] Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, pp. 527–8, 816–18; Daiches, *The King James Version*, pp. 15–28; A. W. Pollard (ed.), *Records of the English Bible* (Oxford: Henry Frowde, Oxford University Press, 1911), pp. 200–22. It should be remembered that Tyndale lived abroad from 1524.

[5] J. F. Mozley, *Coverdale and his Bibles* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1953), pp. 125–41, 283–4.

of political authority. The latter remained the popular Bible, even after the Authorised Version (AV) of 1611, which drew on it frequently.[6]

Vernacular bibles were not, of course, confined to Protestants. The fifteenth-century vernacular translations in Italy and Germany were obviously for Catholics. The German versions initially were based on the Vulgate, but those of Hieronymus Emser (1527) and Johann Dietenberger (1534) followed Luther's translation; as such they found a ready market in the German Catholic states. In France translation of the Bible was officially forbidden by the Edict of Châteaubriant of 1551, though this was largely ineffective. The principal French translation for Catholics in the sixteenth century was authorised by the faculty of theology at Louvain and published in 1550; it borrowed from Olivétan's Geneva version, and the 1578 revision did so even more. The first Polish Bible (translated from the Vulgate) was published in Cracow in 1561; but the Protestant Brest-Litovsk Bible of 1563 was translated from the Hebrew and Greek. The Douai Bible in English was begun in 1578 at the Catholic College in Rheims; the New Testament was published in 1582, but the Old Testament was not completed until 1609–10. The main difference between it and the Protestant versions was that it was based on the Vulgate – almost defiantly – and it also included notes to defend traditional Catholic doctrines of the sacrifice of the mass, priesthood, penance etc. But the number of copies published never rivalled that of the Protestant versions.[7]

One of the principal effects of publishing the Bible in the vernacular was that it made it possible to cross-refer to different books on the printed page. This exposed questions which not only led rapidly to source criticism but also to doctrinal issues: the well-known omission by Erasmus in his Greek New Testament of the inserted reference in 1 John 5:7 to the trinity was but the beginning of renewed trinitarian controversy lasting until the nineteenth century.[8]

Another feature of the continental Bibles, which was not followed widely in England at this time, and even less in Scotland, was the insertion of woodcuts or engravings into the text. The Geneva Bible of 1560 had 26 and the Bishops' Bible had 124; but only a few were included in the first editions of the AV

[6] Hill, *The English Bible*, pp. 10–12, 56–62.

[7] S. L. Greenslade (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), vol. III, pp. 107–9, 116–21, 133, 161–3.

[8] In the AV verse 7 reads 'For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one'; that this is an insertion is now so widely recognised that the RV made the second half of verse 6 into verse 7, thereby obscuring the original insertion completely; the Jerusalem Bible retained a footnote, but indicated that this was probably a gloss in the Vulgate.

and they had gradually disappeared by the late seventeenth century. The only exception was the title page.[9]

The 1630s were probably the peak of English bible production in the early modern period, and the second half of the seventeenth century saw a decline. The increase seems to have come particularly in octavo editions, reflecting more bibles for personal use. The larger bibles went to churches, colleges, the clergy and gentry; smaller copies were used in schools and given to parishioners, and especially children. The evidence of seventeenth-century wills and eighteenth-century autobiographies suggests that bibles were to be found among the lower orders. But it remains the case that, although New Testaments were cheap enough at less than a shilling to be within reach of the poorer groups in society, a complete new bible would have cost a week's wages for an unskilled labourer and half a week's wages for a craftsman.[10]

It was the eighteenth century rather than the seventeenth that saw the spread of Bible reading. In Germany the great efforts to promote this came with Pietism; despite its centrality in the printing trade bible production had remained lower in Germany than in England until this time. The Moravians pioneered the publication of Bible verses for each day of the year with their Losungen. Pietist clergy and laity in Denmark were also responsible for the expansion of schools teaching children to read the Bible free; the same was true in Sweden where a programme of mass education was introduced. This is the context in which to understand the foundation of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in England in 1698, and certainly their early efforts did bring the price of bibles down.[11] But as a result of the Evangelical Revival demand increased further, leading to the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) in 1804.

The BFBS was founded by a committee of the Religious Tract Society (RTS), which had existed since 1799 to write and publish tracts to assist in the work of village preaching. Hannah More had discontinued the publication of her *Cheap Repository Tracts* (initially written to counteract radical chapbooks and pamphlets) in 1798 because of increasing criticism from orthodox Anglicans, who feared any encouragement to reading given to the working classes. The founders of the RTS were Congregationalists but they drew in lay Anglican evangelicals including Samuel Mills and Zachary Macaulay. By 1808 they were drawing in evangelical Anglican clergy as well.[12]

[9] Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp. 68–71.
[10] Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp. 56–61, 79–95.
[11] Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp. 96–9.
[12] Martin, *Evangelicals United*, pp. 148–53.

The story of the sixteen-year-old Mary Jones of Ty'nyddol, who saved up for a Bible in Welsh and walked twenty-eight miles to Bala to buy one from Thomas Charles, who at first refused because they were so scarce and then sold her one when she burst into tears, was standard fare in Sunday schools for more than a century.[13] But Thomas Charles had been concerned about the shortage of Welsh bibles since 1787. The awakening of 1791–3 further stimulated demand, but the SPCK, which only had a stock of 500 Welsh bibles, was reluctant to lay out the capital for a further printing – a reminder of the importance of economic considerations in this whole subject. It agreed to publish an edition of 10,000 bibles and 2,000 New Testaments in 1796, and they appeared in 1799 – another reminder of the practical problems involved in printing. Even so whole counties were left totally unsupplied, but in 1800 the SPCK refused a reprint. Charles therefore asked the RTS committee in 1802 whether they could produce a cheap edition of Welsh bibles, at which point Joseph Hughes, a Baptist minister in Battersea, suggested the formation of a society for the purpose, which might serve the world as well as Wales. In the course of 1803 the structure of the new society was planned, and great care was taken to ensure that Anglicans would be comfortable in it. Accordingly it was agreed that only the AV should be published, and this should be 'without note or comment'. (The lessons of the Geneva Bible had obviously been learnt.)

The society was officially launched at a public meeting on 7 March 1804, with Granville Sharp in the chair. The respectable Anglican layman Henry Thornton was elected treasurer, and £700 was subscribed immediately. Although William Wilberforce thought that the annual income could never exceed £10,000, by its ninth year it was £70,000 and by 1851 it topped £100,000.[14] Purely in economic terms the BFBS became one of the great publishing successes of the nineteenth century, and perhaps the best advertisement for the success of the principle of the voluntary society. Initially a subscription of one guinea to the national Society secured the right to purchase bibles at a discount. But the key development, which changed the nature of the Society, was the setting up of local auxiliaries, the first two being founded in Reading and Nottingham in 1809. These made it possible to appeal to those who could not afford a guinea a year. Half the funds collected locally went to London to support the work of translation and expansion overseas; half were retained to run the local group and supply bibles at cost price (not discounts). The credit

[13] Canton, *A History*, vol. 1, pp. 465–6. The story was first published in the Society's *Monthly Reporter* for January 1867.

[14] Canton, *A History*, vol. 1, pp. 6–14; Martin, *Evangelicals United*, pp. 80–7.

for developing this system belongs to Charles Stokes Dudley (1780–1862), a Quaker merchant from Bristol who subsequently moved to London and also became an Anglican. With the Quaker solicitor Richard Phillips, Dudley devised the rules for national–local relationships in 1812. Between 1809 and 1816 177 auxiliary societies had been formed in England and 47 in Scotland. By 1812 over 60 per cent of the Society's funds was coming from auxiliaries, rising to a maximum of £61,848 in 1815, only dropping when the Apocrypha controversy led to Scottish withdrawals. Alongside the auxiliaries there were local Bible associations, deliberately designed to appeal to the working classes. From 1821 Dudley was the paid district secretary of the Society for over thirty years. One characteristic of the auxiliaries and associations was that they were organised on the basis of districts, somewhere between the size of a parish and a county, related to the emerging distribution of the expanding population. This kind of structure aroused the suspicion of high churchmen such as H. H. Norris, rector of Hackney, for its disregard of traditional parish boundaries and also for its similarity to the penny-a-week radical organisations such as the United Irishmen. While the idea that Bible societies might be politically subversive may seem absurd, it not only recalls attitudes to the early Puritans but even to John Wesley's Methodist societies in the eighteenth century.[15] The auxiliaries and associations were also the place where the local balance between the Church of England and Nonconformity was most important, with opportunities for meetings with addresses where the line between exhortation to support the objects of the society and preaching was a fine one.

Nationally the first battle was for the evangelical laity to win the hearts of the evangelical clergy. Even Charles Simeon was initially cool, but he was won over, and the Society soon gained the patronage of Bishops Porteus of London and Shute Barrington of Durham as vice-presidents, together with Bishop Burgess of St David's. By 1810 eleven bishops and two Irish archbishops were patrons; even some Roman Catholic bishops in Ireland privately supported it. There were two joint secretaries, one Anglican and one Nonconformist, and the entirely lay committee contained fifteen Anglicans, fifteen Nonconformists, and six foreigners resident in London. Its interdenominational membership attracted hostility from some churchmen, notably Herbert Marsh, Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, when the Cambridge auxiliary was founded in 1810; but the significant point was that the auxiliary went ahead with the support of the master of Trinity and several noblemen, including the Duke of Gloucester, the chancellor of the

[15] Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*, pp. 37–52; Canton, *A History*, vol. 1, pp. 47–52.

university.[16] In fact, the Society proved to be unstoppable, and it also survived several controversies.

The first was effectively headed off. High Churchmen had demanded that the Bible be published with the Prayer Book; this had been one of Marsh's complaints in 1810, but such demands were firmly resisted. The second was whether the rule about 'without note or comment' excluded the marginal textual cross-references in the AV; this was agreed in 1810 for bibles in the UK, though practice in Continental countries varied. On the other hand, the Society decided not to print the metrical psalms in its Scottish bibles after 1811, which effectively reduced the demand for its bibles in Scotland. Then there was controversy, again high-church inspired, about the Society's use of women's associations to distribute their bibles, on the grounds that this was often accompanied by addresses and exhortations to the recipients; and there were similar complaints about the addresses given at meetings of the Society's auxiliaries in general. Although none of these was particularly important in itself, cumulatively the effect was to cause anxiety among many Anglican members, which then affected the way in which the two major controversies were handled.

In 1825 the Apocrypha controversy exploded. The Society did not include the Old Testament apocryphal books in its English-language versions, but in Europe, where the inclusion of the Apocrypha was normal, from 1813 it permitted the foreign societies to do so. When this was discovered by Robert Haldane in 1821 he wrote a letter to the committee warning that this would lead to a secession of auxiliary societies and subscribers. Lord Teignmouth, as chairman, tried a series of compromises between 1822 and 1825; but eventually the Edinburgh and Glasgow auxiliaries withdrew in 1826, and two years later there were only eight Scottish auxiliaries still subscribing to London. (It is sometimes said that the reason for this being more strongly felt in Scotland was that the Westminster Confession states that 'The Books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the scripture' (Art. III). However, Article VI of the Thirty-Nine Articles makes no reference to divine inspiration, but is equally clear that the apocryphal books are not read 'to establish any doctrine'. It is more likely that the Scots were sore about the Bible Society's refusal to print the metrical psalms with the Bible.) The long-term consequence was that Bible Society versions in European

[16] Canton, *A History*, vol. I, pp. 15–22; Martin, *Evangelicals United*, pp. 85–91; Thompson, *Cambridge Theology*, pp. 45–6.

vernaculars became less important by comparison with those printed locally, which continued to include the Apocrypha.

Finally there was the 'Socinian' or test controversy, which broke out in 1830. There had been suspicion by some of Unitarian membership of the Bible Society almost from the beginning. But it grew after the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, particularly among conservative evangelicals of the kind who supported the *Record*, who once again included a number of Scots. The first proposal from Derby in September 1830, which seemed innocuous enough, was that business meetings should open with prayer; but soon afterwards several auxiliaries sought to ban Unitarians from membership. The national committee declined to do this in November, and the annual meeting at Exeter Hall in May 1831 overwhelmingly defeated a motion to institute a membership test. After further attempts to force a change in policy failed in 1832, the Trinitarian Bible Society was formed in December of that year, and its first resolution excluded Roman Catholics as well as Unitarians. It was committed to the divine inerrancy and inspiration of the Scriptures, and has also persistently manifested the same affection for the so-called received text, that used by the sixteenth-century Reformers, as Catholics have shown for the Vulgate; its reasons have been essentially the same: that this embodied significant doctrinal principles. Nevertheless, the Bible Society survived, and those who withdrew were relatively small minorities. What the story indicates, however, is that the circulation of the Bible was never without controversy.[17]

The Bible Society also transformed the publication of the Bible in European vernaculars, as well as in overseas missions. The Reverend C. Steinkopff, minister of the German congregation in the Savoy and foreign secretary of the RTS, was in touch with religious leaders and associations in Europe. Shortly after its foundation in 1804 the Society offered a grant of £100 if an association like the British one were founded in Germany, and this invitation was readily taken up with the foundation of an auxiliary Bible society in Nuremberg; 5,000 copies of the German New Testament were ordered for distribution in Germany and Austria, and 1,000 of these were made available for distribution among the Catholics of Bavaria and Swabia. A further grant of £200 was made for the publication of the complete Lutheran Bible, and in 1806 the Society moved to Basel; £100 was also made available for the formation of a society in Berlin. The first French New Testaments were sent to Jersey in

[17] Canton, *A History*, vol. 1, pp. 303–9, 319–62; Martin, *Evangelicals United*, pp. 99–146; A. J. Brown, *The Word of God among All Nations: A Brief History of the Trinitarian Bible Society* (London: The [Trinitarian Bible] Society, 1981), pp. 7–25.

1805–6. When the Napoleonic Wars were over efforts immediately began in France, and £76,000 was spent there in the next nineteen years. Editions of the New Testament in Spanish, Portuguese and Italian were issued in batches of 5,000 in 1808–9, together with similar editions in Dutch and Danish. By June 1817 816,278 bibles and 986,883 New Testaments had been printed for the Society in eighteen languages.[18]

The Society's first bibles were printed by Cambridge University Press from 1805, but in 1809 it began to negotiate with Oxford University Press and then the King's Printers. These three presses held the monopoly on printing English bibles in England, and the university presses depended on bible sales for the bulk of their profits at this time. Essentially the Society aimed to reduce the price of bibles, and was quite prepared to play off one supplier against another, and also to go abroad for the supply of bibles in other languages. By 1830 Cambridge had supplied 25 per cent, the King's Printer 36 per cent and Oxford 39 per cent of the Society's bibles. By the middle of the century, deftly avoiding the controversy of the monopoly of the privileged presses (from which, on balance, it benefited) the Society had driven down the price of bibles, but at the expense of entrenching bible production in a standard cheap format, which did not change until the modern translations began to appear. By reducing the profit margin on what had been the university presses' main money-spinner, the Society also effectively encouraged them to develop alternative markets in scholarly publishing.[19]

There were also alternative suppliers. In 1839 the patent of the Queen's Printer in Scotland to print bibles was not renewed, and it was replaced by a Board for Bible Circulation. The Board's secretary, the Reverend Adam Thomson, began a campaign against the English bible monopoly, with the active support of the Reverend John Campbell, another Scot, who was now minister of Moorfields' Tabernacle and Tottenham Court Road Chapel in London and a leading Congregational journalist. This, like other later campaigns, was unsuccessful, but it did involve attacks on the Bible Society and resulted in price reductions.[20] Samuel Bagster managed to get round the patent by publishing inexpensive polyglot bibles (including the Hebrew Old Testament, the Septuagint Greek Old Testament, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Latin Vulgate, the English AV, the Greek *textus receptus* of the New Testament and the ancient Syriac New Testament) from 1816. Subsequently various editions of the English version of

[18] Canton, *A History*, vol. I, pp. 23–4, 29, 100–3.
[19] Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*, pp. 76–97, 113, 191–3.
[20] Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*, pp. 114–15; A. Peel, *These Hundred Years* (London: Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1931), pp. 129–30.

Bagster's polyglot bible were published, with notes for preachers and Sunday school teachers, and his own set of marginal cross-references.[21]

The discovery of new manuscripts in the Middle East from the time of Tischendorf in the 1850s and the application of source criticism to the existing Hebrew and Greek texts led to pressure for new translations to reflect a revised view of what the 'original text' might have been. The most obvious results of this in the UK were the Revised Version (RV) of 1881/5, and Westcott and Hort's Greek text of the New Testament of 1881, which was not the one used for the RV. But the demand for even more 'modern' translations was reflected in those by Dr James Moffatt, who published a translation of the New Testament in 1913, the Old Testament in 1924 and a one-volume edition of the complete Bible in 1926. The popularity of this in inter-war Britain stimulated others to follow Moffatt's lead. After the war J. B. Phillips published a translation of the Epistles, *Letters to Young Churches* (1947), and then a complete New Testament (1972); whilst E. V. Rieu translated the Gospels for the Penguin Classics series (1952). A very different enterprise was that by a teacher, Alan Dale, who used current critical scholarship to write two books, *New World* (1967) and *Winding Quest* (1972), each of which set out to translate 'the heart of the New Testament and Old Testament in plain English'. The result was striking and valuable for both Sunday schools and day schools; but it also marked a decisive shift away from direct translation of any manuscript text in its entirety as it had come down through the centuries. It was poised delicately on the boundary line between translation and interpretation. In addition to these, but actually struggling to catch up with them, came official versions such as the Revised Standard Version in the USA (1952) and the New English Bible (1961/70), each of which was revised within a few decades to take account of the move away from traditional language, the Good News Bible, the New International Version for those who wanted the cadences of the AV, but with (partially) modernised textual readings, and numerous others. By the end of the century it was no longer possible to speak of a single English Bible, which most younger people in the population knew.

In the rest of Europe there never had been a dominant vernacular version to compare with the AV, apart from Luther's Bible in Germany. But the more divided church structures facilitated variety, whereas in England the one thing which Anglicans and Dissenters shared was the AV. Some of the printers from a Reformed background published Luther's text with their own prefaces

[21] H. R. Tedder, 'Bagster, Samuel, the Elder (1771–1851)', rev. J.-M. Alter, *ODNB*, vol. III, pp. 249–50.

and glosses from the late sixteenth century onwards. The 'Weimar Bible' was commissioned by Duke Ernst the Pious of Gotha in 1640 at Nuremberg, and was regularly reprinted for a century and a half. Printers gradually left out the pictures and the notes in order to reduce the cost. In 1710 a new initiative by Baron Canstein in Brandenburg led to the printing of some 3 million bibles at Halle, which were sold below cost price, with the difference made up by contributions from Pietist supporters. Nevertheless, the contributions did not match the level of those in Britain after 1804. The text was also revised several times during the century. Thus by the end of the eighteenth century German biblical scholars such as W. M. L. de Wette, J. D. Michaelis and Johann Albrecht Bengel were producing their own translations; but no official alternative to Luther's text was published until 1890. New German translations were also published in nineteenth-century Switzerland, but a further revision of the 1890 text in the twentieth century was delayed by the Second World War and only published around 1960.

In France the Geneva Bible remained supreme, though there were several Catholic translations in the seventeenth century, the best known being that of Isaac Le Maistre de Sacy from the Jansenist circle at Port-Royal, published between 1657 and 1696. The most notable modern translation was the Jerusalem Bible (1948–54) undertaken by the Dominican École biblique de Jérusalem, further revised in 1973. Although this was intended as a study bible, it became popular for liturgical use (particularly the Psalms), and has also been translated into English and given an official Catholic imprimatur. In Holland the official text commissioned by the States-General in 1618–19 and published in 1637 remained dominant until the twentieth-century translation by the Dutch Bible Society (New Testament 1939, Old Testament 1951). There were no Spanish translations until the end of the eighteenth century, and Italian translations were not permitted until 1757; but in each case standard vernacular texts were a product of the twentieth century. In Scandinavia the publication of vernacular translations was affected by the changing political linkages of the principal states: Norway was linked to Denmark until 1814, then Sweden, and only became independent in 1905; so the question of what the appropriate vernacular language was remained contentious until the twentieth century.[22]

What did people make of the vernacular Bible? The availability of the Bible in print meant that its interpretation could no longer be the preserve of scholars or the clergy in general. The immediate consequences in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were political. There were not only questions of

[22] Greenslade (ed.), *Cambridge History*, vol. III, pp. 339–60.

civil and ecclesiastical authority at stake in the extent of the availability of the Bible. Henry VIII might welcome the availability of a vernacular Bible in churches, but have hesitations about its presence in the home, especially those of unlettered folk. But more serious were the criticisms of bad kings in the Old Testament, routinely used by political critics of contemporary monarchies. The injunctions against idolatry were even more important in driving the iconoclastic elements of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Puritanism.

Some of the implications for doctrine were more serious still. Reference has already been made to the opening up of the Trinitarian controversy as a result of Erasmus's edition of the Greek New Testament. Christopher Hill wrote that it was 'difficult to be sure to what extent the absolute authority of the Bible had been accepted by ordinary people, and even more difficult to ascertain how far down the social scale doubts about its authority went in the 1640s'.[23] The more radical groups, such as the Quakers, were certainly prepared to affirm the primary authority of the Spirit rather than the Bible, with unpredictable consequences. With such views went a readiness to see biblical stories as allegories rather than history.

The idea that such challenges had to wait until the nineteenth century is obviously false. Quite apart from the scepticism of the eighteenth-century *philosophes*, or the historical criticisms of Edward Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, at the popular level Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* (1794) was as significant for religious attitudes as his earlier *The Rights of Man* (1791–2) had been for radical politics. Part I of *The Rights of Man* sold 50,000 copies in a few weeks and part II sold 32,000 copies in a month. It was alleged that by the time of his death 1.5 million copies of part II had been sold. Even if this is an exaggerated figure, the sales were remarkable.[24] *The Age of Reason* was never as popular, but it was given a fillip when the Society for the Suppression of Vice prosecuted the radical bookseller Richard Carlile for publishing 1,000 copies in 1818. Within a month it was sold out, and two-thirds of a second edition of 3,000 had gone within six months. It was generally available under the counter from second-hand booksellers from the 1820s.[25] Paine's arguments were those which were to become familiar in the nineteenth century: it was impossible to believe that the Bible was the word of God on moral grounds, because of God's command to the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites; Moses

[23] Hill, *The English Bible*, p. 237.
[24] Altick, *English Common Reader*, pp. 69–71.
[25] Altick, *English Common Reader*, pp. 327, 253.

could not have written the Pentateuch, since it contains the description of his own death; the authorship of Joshua, Samuel, the Psalms and the later parts of Isaiah was equally questionable.[26] These criticisms were regarded as being sufficiently serious to provoke the semi-retired Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, Richard Watson, to write his *Apology for the Bible*, in which he sought to refute Paine. Nevertheless, in some ways what he conceded was as significant as what he defended; for example, he did not attempt to harmonise the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus, instead suggesting that this was not 'a matter of any great consequence to Christianity'.[27]

What did change from the later eighteenth century was that Christian scholars were starting to take the problems of the literal accuracy of the Bible more seriously. It is significant that the origins of German biblical criticism lay in late seventeenth-century England. I have noted elsewhere that the point at which English scholars seem to have stopped reading German authors regularly was when they ceased to publish in Latin and only published in German.[28] But more significant was probably the point that those who challenged conventional wisdom were as often Dissenters as Anglicans. Thus Nathaniel Lardner, whose *Credibility of the Gospel History* (1727–55) remained a classic source for Anglicans such as Richard Watson and John Kaye, was a Dissenter, even though his *Works* were published by public subscription including twenty-six fellows of Oxford and Cambridge colleges. For Anglican clergy, and particularly those who looked for preferment, the espousal of critical views could be risky. Herbert Marsh translated Michaelis's *Introduction to the New Testament* and offered his own hypothesis about the origin of the Gospel narratives in the 1790s, but after he became Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity at Cambridge in 1807 (and certainly after he became a bishop in 1816) he ceased to publish on potentially controversial matters. Adam Sedgwick was ordained and professor of geology at Cambridge, but the fact that he regarded the Genesis creation narratives as parables did not matter if he remained as a fellow of a Cambridge college. His lectures were, however, popular with undergraduates, so the new views can hardly have been novel when they eventually burst into the press later in the century.

The significance of what geologists such as Sedgwick were able to demonstrate about the age of the earth lay not so much in the challenge to the

[26] T. Paine, *The Age of Reason*, ed. M. D. Conway (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900), pp. 34, 90, 93–100, 102–4, 106–8, 110–12, 126–7, 129–34.
[27] R. Watson, *An Apology for the Bible*, 7th edn. (London: printed for T. Evans, 1797), pp. 291–2; Thompson, *Cambridge Theology*, pp. 22–3.
[28] Thompson, *Cambridge Theology*, p. 178.

literal truth of the Genesis accounts of creation as in their postulation of an alternative story, which was not only longer than the dating worked out by Archbishop Ussher in the seventeenth century but also brought human beings on to the scene relatively late. The discovery of fossils of the whole generation of reptiles, collectively known as dinosaurs, added to the problems by introducing a range of creatures which, first, were not referred to in the biblical accounts at all and secondly, had subsequently become extinct. The very concept of extinction was itself a challenge to the traditional understanding of creation.

For churchmen there was then a dual problem in communicating this to the wider public. Did this mean that the Bible contained stories that were not true? If so, how was this compatible with the general struggle to defend the Bible from accusations of forgery and falsehood that had been prompted by the Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century? Secondly, how was the authentic character of divine revelation as contained in the Bible to be defended in this new situation; in other words, in what sense was revelation *authentic*? Clearly a much more sophisticated kind of defence than those offered hitherto was required. One minor detail which was embarrassing was the habit that had developed since the seventeenth century of putting the dates for various events, derived from Ussher's calculations, at the head of the marginal references on each page of the Bible (even though they were not in the original AV); Bagster's *Teachers' Bible*, for example, was still printing these at the end of the nineteenth century.

The significance of the challenge to the creation stories lay not only in the technical area of science and religion; it also lay more fundamentally in the role of Genesis in setting the scene for the story of the Fall, which was crucial to conventional theories of the atonement. The word 'Fall' is not, of course, mentioned in the biblical text (either Old or New Testament), though it appears in the marginal headings of the text in the AV. Nor do Paul's references to the second Adam in Romans depend on the kind of hereditary doctrine of the Fall first developed fully by St Augustine of Hippo. However, the faithfulness with which the Reformers followed Augustine ensured that this doctrine made its way into the Reformation confessions as though it was directly taken from Scripture rather than inferred. The Pietist and Evangelical Revivals of the eighteenth century meant that this doctrine was central in early nineteenth-century theology at the point when the literal basis for it was collapsing.

By comparison the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was an almost trivial issue, but Herbert Marsh defended it in one of his early books. It was left to

German scholarship to develop the two-source theory of the Pentateuch, first raising the possibility that the prophetic books preceded the final redactions of the Pentateuch. In Britain Old Testament scholarship was slower to catch up with what was developing in Germany. Samuel Davidson, a Congregational scholar at the Lancashire Independent College, lost his job in 1859, because of his espousal of newer views. It is sometimes asserted that Pusey's long tenure of the Oxford Regius Chair of Hebrew from 1828 to 1882 impeded the adoption of newer views in the Church of England; but this misses the main point, namely that in the English universities there were no professorships dedicated to critical Old Testament study at this time. The occupants of the professorships of Hebrew were concerned with issues of Hebrew language, itself a booming field in the period because of the discoveries of new manuscripts, rather than the composition of the Old Testament. But Pusey's successor, S. R. Driver, and other scholars, such as T. K. Cheyne, were to the fore in circulating the newer views of the Old Testament in the last two decades of the century. The only other issue in Old Testament criticism which had significant wider ramifications was probably the dual (or triple) authorship of Isaiah, and particularly the translation of Isaiah 7:14 – 'Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and call his name Immanuel' – where the alternative suggested for 'virgin' of 'a young woman' seemed at first sight to threaten the biblical basis for the doctrine of the virgin birth.

Not so much hung on the dating of the New Testament books until the Tübingen School suggested that some of the Gospels may have been written much later than hitherto supposed, and that Acts in particular might be a product of the second century, representing an example of *Frühkatholicismus*, that is to say the attempt to reconcile the contrasting views of Peter and Paul into a synthesis, which led in time to the emergence of the Catholic doctrine of the Church. The fact that this argument was significantly loaded confessionally seems not to have attracted as much attention among the historians of New Testament criticism as one might have expected. If there is one major achievement in English New Testament criticism in the nineteenth century, it is the relentless scholarship that J. B. Lightfoot applied to refuting this view in his study *The Apostolic Fathers*. The point here was a very simple one: given that the early Fathers of the Church, such as Clement, Ignatius and others, cite various New Testament texts, it follows that those texts must have been composed before the Fathers wrote. By demonstrating an early date for the letters of the Fathers, Lightfoot brought the dates of the Gospels and Acts back into the first century – although, as has almost become inevitable in biblical criticism, the arguments have continued to rage back and forth in the twentieth

century and beyond, as new manuscripts and new scholarly techniques have been deployed.

By contrast, the Cambridge trio of Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort showed little interest in the source criticism of the Gospels that had attracted the writing of Marsh at the beginning of the nineteenth century; and the discussion in English of the various sources for the Gospels and the possible 'sayings' source, designated Q (from the German *Quelle* = source) had to wait for the next generation. This is therefore the sense in which Cambridge New Testament criticism, despite its pioneering textual work, remained essentially conservative on questions of authorship. Again the underlying concern seems to be that to admit anything like pseudonymous authorship ran the risk of implying at a popular level that the biblical books were not authentic, with the implicit consequence that they could not be trusted. Ironically, although classical scholarship at the same time was introducing the idea of myths in historical writing (as in Niebuhr's *History of Rome*, the first two volumes of which were translated by Julius Hare and Connop Thirlwall in 1827 – one later an archdeacon and the other a bishop) there was not the same tendency to question the attributions of authorship of leading classical writers, such as Thucydides, Herodotus, Livy etc. (with the possible exception of Homer). So, although developments in classical scholarship provided the models for much that was happening in biblical scholarship, the results seem to answer more questions than they raised, unlike biblical scholarship.

There were short-lived squalls in the second half of the nineteenth century. *Essays and Reviews*, a rather mixed book of essays by Oxford and Cambridge dons, was published in 1860, and attracted attention not so much because of the novelty of the ideas it contained as because of the significance of some of its contributors – Benjamin Jowett at Oxford (who had already missed the mastership of Balliol in 1854 because of his known enthusiasm for German views) and Frederick Temple (later Archbishop of Canterbury) to name but two. It was given greater prominence than it deserved because of the ultimately unsuccessful attempt to prosecute two of the authors in the courts, followed by petitions against it signed by a remarkably large number of Anglican clergy and a condemnation from the Convocation of Canterbury. The case of the inability of John W. Colenso, the Bishop of Natal, to make some of the numbers in Genesis add up, and the dispute over who had jurisdiction in the matter, was one of the factors leading to the first Lambeth Conference in 1867. Nonconformists had their various causes célèbres, such as the Congregationalists' fuss over Samuel Davidson's critical approach to the Old Testament at the Lancashire Independent College (which led to his

resignation in 1857) and the Baptist Union's 'Down Grade' controversy in the later 1880s.[29] The Free Church of Scotland was agonised by the critical articles on the Old Testament in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* written by W. Robertson Smith, professor in the Free Church College at Aberdeen, and he eventually had to take refuge in the University of Cambridge. Nevertheless, for both English Nonconformists and Scottish Presbyterians of varying types, a semester or two at one of the leading German universities had become almost de rigueur for the brightest ministers in training by the 1860s; and this opened up a significant gap between them and comparable scholars in the Church of England.

None of these controversies, however, was as significant either biblically or doctrinally as the furore in Germany created by David Strauss's *Leben Jesu* in 1836, or his later *Die christliche Glaubenslehre* (Systematic theology, 2 vols., 1840–1).[30] By the later nineteenth century in Germany the source criticism of both the Old and New Testaments was well advanced, and although it was far from being taken for granted, it created a context for the study of the Bible that seemed light years away from that in Great Britain. Indeed, the assumption of a critical approach to the Bible, with the doctrinal consequences that followed, was one reason why many German Protestants were so readily persuaded that Pope Pius IX's condemnation of modern civilisation in number 80 of the *Syllabus of Errors* of 1864 was really a threat to freedom of enquiry that had to be resisted in the *Kulturkampf* of the 1870s. A scholar such as Adolf von Harnack, whose multi-volume *History of Christian Dogma* (1885, English translation 1905) was itself in many ways a polemical as well as historical work, became the leading exponent of liberal Protestantism in the Second German Empire, winning him ennoblement as a result.

At the same time the popular questioning of the Bible remained primarily at the level set by eighteenth-century writers such as Hume, Gibbon and Paine. The possibility (or otherwise) of miracles remained a popular debating point, and the idea of a bloodthirsty God, either in some of the Old Testament narratives or (more significantly) in popular expositions of the atonement, became the stuff of debates between secularist or agnostic orators and local clergymen. The ex-Wesleyan Methodist Joseph Barker (who eventually joined another Methodist group) is one example of such a mid–nineteenth-century speaker; Thomas Cooper, a Baptist, was another. Such public debates in an

[29] See Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism*, pp. 197–208; John Briggs, *English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1994), pp. 167–71.

[30] See the excellent discussion in Johannes Zachhuber, *Theology as Science in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 80–6.

age when sermons, debates and public speeches were the main oral means of communication were as much occasions of entertainment as information. Later in the century T. H. Huxley was a public speaker on behalf of the National Secular Society. Nevertheless, it is significant that Nonconformity, with its de facto looser doctrinal standards, made it possible for some to stay within the Christian fold.

Britain was probably unique in nineteenth-century Europe in the extent to which such freedom of speech existed. In France, as in some other predominantly Catholic countries, there was an increase in anti-clericalism, but it seems to have been more focused on antagonism to the church as an institution than the basis of Christianity as such. Nevertheless, across Europe, in different ways, the increase in literacy and the development of public education meant that it became possible for ordinary people to discuss the Bible, without necessarily being under the guidance of the clergy. Within Evangelical circles in Britain and Pietist-inspired groups in Germany, Holland and Scandinavia such domestic Bible study was positively encouraged; and a whole new range of books and pamphlets was written to supply the need. (The Moravian Losungen have already been mentioned, but their later successors include the International Bible Reading Association and the European versions of the American Methodist *Upper Room* booklets, now produced in a multitude of languages.) Sunday schools and their Continental European equivalents were the main focus of such activity, but from the 1850s the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) became just as significant in providing material for young men entering commercial or management jobs away from home, or young women becoming governesses or other new professional occupations. In turn this prompted an extension into college-based Christian unions – at first in the USA, where the number of liberal arts colleges was greater than in Europe – but then more widely in Britain and Europe, resulting eventually in the foundation of the World Student Christian Federation. The evangelical origins of this movement were reflected in its concern for overseas missions, but for the purposes of this topic its significance lies in the development of Bible study material, since regular meetings of small groups for Bible study and prayer were a central feature of the pattern of organisation. D. L. Moody was but one of a large number of revivalists who came out of this inheritance. Moody was not ordained, nor were the YMCA, YWCA and Christian Union members; and the significance of this is that biblical interpretation was ceasing institutionally to be a clerical monopoly.

The exploitation of these new markets led in both conservative and liberal directions. The nineteenth century was a period when the market in theological books began to take off, owing to the skilful entrepreneurial actions of various publishers. On the one hand this was a way in which more radical biblical criticism could leapfrog the clergy and get into the hands of the interested public. Various publishers established lists of books and series, which communicated the results of biblical criticism quickly. Williams & Norgate are perhaps the most obvious example – their Theological Translations Library published Harnack's *History of Dogma*, and they were also responsible for the Crown Theological Library series; Macmillan published Lightfoot, Maurice, Westcott and Hort (and their American arm published the New Testament Handbooks series, edited by Shailer Mathews). Cambridge University Press published their Bible Series for Schools and Colleges from the 1890s. On the other hand it was possible to bolster traditional views, particularly by the annotations, guides and maps which were a routine part of Bibles such as Bagster's *Teachers' Bible*. Its preface clearly stated its doctrinal purpose. *Cruden's Complete Concordance* was included in an appendix, together with a chronology of the Old Testament, an itinerary of the journey of Children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan, a comparative chronological table of the kings and prophets of Israel and Judah, the Harmony of the Four Evangelists (following Archbishop Newcome), the prophecies and allusions to Christ in the Old Testament (derived from William Hales), names and titles of the Son of God, and finally, 4,000 questions and answers on the Old and New Testaments for the use of teachers. This might be compared with the *Sunday School Centenary Bible*, published by Eyre & Spottiswoode in 1880, whose editors included S. R. Driver, T. K. Cheyne and William Sanday. The text was still that of the AV, but it included footnotes giving the variorum readings from the latest manuscripts. However, Ussher's dates still appeared at the top of every page (as in Bagster's Bibles). The 1880 edition included the appendix of Aids to the Student of the Holy Bible, which had first been published in 1877. This consisted of a much more comprehensive set of articles than Bagster provided, and it included an index of persons, places and subjects in the Bible, as well as a concordance based on Cruden, and a set of maps. The so-called International Sunday School Lessons, which originated in the USA, spread rapidly through the English-speaking world (outside the Church of England); and the British Sunday School Union organised regular Scripture examinations for Sunday scholars. Thus while the degree of scholarship reflected in such Bibles was steadily increasing, it proved remarkably difficult to shake off the 'traditional' biblical chronology.

It is also necessary to mention C. I. Scofield's Reference Bible (1909), which represented the embodiment of a dispensationalist pre-millennialism in the annotations of Scripture. This could be regarded as a primarily North American phenomenon – Scofield followed Moody as pastor of the church at Northfield, and it became the standard reference work for American fundamentalism, as it emerged in the second and third decades of the twentieth century – were it not for the fact that it was published rather surprisingly by Oxford University Press. It has been claimed (somewhat implausibly) that this was the first Oxford University Bible to sell a million copies. A reset version in new type was published in 1917, and added interest in Scofield's pre-millennialism was given by General Allenby's capture of Jerusalem early in 1918, which stimulated the holding of several 'prophetic conferences' in Britain and the USA at that time.[31] From this point the link between Christian pre-millennialism and Zionism began in earnest. One of the keys to Scofield's success was undoubtedly the appearance of being in touch with the latest scholarship which his introduction and notes implied. For example, in his original 1909 introduction he claimed that 'the discovery of the Sinaitic MS and the labours in the field of textual criticism of such scholars as Griesbach, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Winer, Alford and Westcott and Hort, have cleared the Greek *textus receptus* of minor inaccuracies, while confirming in a remarkable degree the general accuracy of the Authorized Version of that text'[32] – an assertion which would have made Hort's hair stand on end! Yet one does not normally expect to find plain lies published between the leather-bound covers of an OUP bible. Needless to say the Scofield Reference Bible retains the Ussher chronology at the head of every page.

This is why Arthur Peake's one-volume *Commentary on the Bible* (London, 1920) had almost revolutionary significance. Peake was Rylands Professor of Biblical Exegesis at the University of Manchester and on the staff of Hartley Primitive Methodist College; he gathered a group of predominantly, but not exclusively, Nonconformist scholars to write the chapters on different books of the Bible. Its purpose was clearly stated in the opening sentence of the preface: 'The present work is designed to put before the reader in a simple form, without technicalities, the generally accepted results of Biblical Criticism, Interpretation, History, and Theology.' Twice in the next two sentences Peake disavowed any devotional intent, and he was clear about the

[31] Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, p. 233.
[32] *The Holy Bible*, ed. Rev. C. I. Scofield, DD (Oxford: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1917), p. iv.

intended audience: 'While it is intended in the first instance for the layman, and should prove especially helpful to day and Sunday school teachers, to lay preachers, to leaders of men's societies, brotherhoods, and adult Bible classes, and to Christian workers generally, it should also be of considerable use to clergymen and ministers, and in particular to theological students.'[33] The commentary was based on the text of the RV; Mark was placed before Matthew in the consideration of the Gospels, Colossians and Philemon were considered with Ephesians, thereby reflecting the scholarly consensus of the time. New Testament writers were not designated 'Saint', an editorial decision which Peake explained by saying that 'the realisation the apostles and evangelists were men of flesh and blood like our own . . . is likely to be somewhat blunted by bringing into our interpretation of the record the attitude of a later age'.[34]

Some of the ways in which this was carried through may be briefly indicated. Principal Griffith-Jones, in the opening essay of the book, 'The Bible: Its Meaning and Aim', wrote confidently that within living memory the creation story had been the subject of 'the fiercest controversies between scientists and theologians', since both sides took it for granted that Genesis gave a 'literal account of the making of the universe in six days of twenty-four hours each'; but, he affirmed, 'we have travelled away so rapidly from such a position to-day that it is hard to enter into the mind of either side in the controversy, or to excuse their temper'.[35] Peake himself wrote the chapter on Genesis and early on dismissed traditional views with a few quick hammer blows: 'Apart from internal inconsistencies there are intrinsic incredibilities. That the story of the Deluge is not unvarnished history is shown in the Introduction to it. The narrative of creation cannot be reconciled with our present knowledge except by special pleading which verges on dishonesty.'[36] In the commentary on chapters 2 and 3 the word 'Fall' is never mentioned, nor does it appear in the index to the *Commentary* as a whole. All this was in a commentary intended primarily for lay people, selling at 15 shillings. Not surprisingly it created a storm of controversy when it was published, with some otherwise eminent churchmen condemning it as the work of the Devil. Even as late as the Second World War people were to be found who muttered about the pernicious effect of Peake's *Commentary*. But after the war the controversy gradually died away, and it is an interesting reflection on the growth of conservative theological

[33] Peake (ed.), *A Commentary*, p. xi.
[34] Peake (ed.), *A Commentary*, p. xiii.
[35] Peake (ed.), *A Commentary*, p. 12.
[36] Peake (ed.), *A Commentary*, p. 133.

attitudes in the late twentieth century that some of the old issues have been revived as though they had never been resolved.

The history of the Bible Reading Fellowship began at almost exactly the same time. Canon Leslie Mannering, vicar of St Matthew's, Brixton, began what was initially called the Fellowship of St Matthew in January 1922, as a way of providing 'the new light that had been shed on the Bible in recent years' to readers 'in a simple way'.[37] It was intended to be definitely Anglican (by referring specifically to the lessons set for Holy Communion), perhaps a reflection of the extent to which the pace had been set by others, and contained a monthly leaflet with daily readings from the Gospel of Matthew. By the end of 1926 the circulation was nearly 1,500 copies. From this small beginning its expansion was rapid, and a variety of series of notes was being produced by the outbreak of war in 1939. A. C. Headlam, the Bishop of Gloucester, was by then the chairman of the Fellowship. But although it had a definite Anglican basis, it was not exclusive: it appealed to all shades of opinion within the church, and several Free Churchmen contributed to its notes. By 1947 it was producing translations in other European languages and had 6,600 branches. At the time of its seventy-fifth anniversary in 1997 it was producing translations in Dutch, German, Swedish, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Afrikaans and Welsh; its range of authors was completely ecumenical and it had begun its People's Bible Commentary series as well as its Livewires series for seven-to-ten-year-olds. It also moved into production of audio cassettes and material for PCs, thereby indicating that in the twenty-first century print is being overtaken by other media.

One thing that did change in the twentieth century was the increasing use of the Bible once more to justify political resistance. The way was led by Karl Barth with the Barmen Declaration in 1934 as a basis for the confessing church to resist the German Christian movement in Nazi Germany. After the war the Bible once again became politicised, first by being used by the Dutch Reformed Church to justify apartheid in South Africa, and then by being invoked increasingly by other churches against that doctrine. The churches behind the Iron Curtain proved to be significant rallying points against communism in its closing days. If liberation theology is added to that mix, then the political significance of the Bible in Europe has intensified since 1945.

As already indicated, the twentieth century saw a steady advance in the variety of translations and commentaries that were available. In both Protestant churches and the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council the use

[37] *The Story of the Bible Reading Fellowship*, p. 23.

of modern translations was encouraged in the liturgy; and the variety of translations available could become somewhat daunting. The adoption of the Revised Common Lectionary by many churches worldwide from the 1990s brought a common pattern of readings from Scripture in weekly worship on a wider scale than ever before. With this it was possible for both the Bible societies and the churches themselves to provide an increasing number of aids and supplementary material for use at home by ordinary church members. It is virtually impossible to stay in a hotel in the Western world without having at hand a copy of the Bible (usually still in the English AV) provided by Gideons International in one's room. The Reformers' goal of widespread bible distribution seems to have been virtually achieved in western Europe. Yet the increasingly secular atmosphere in schools and public life and the declining numbers in many churches probably mean that public familiarity with the Bible is declining. 'A poll of churchgoers in 1994 found that only 44% read their Bibles more than once a week, and only 26% read it daily. 12% said that they never read it at all.'[38] Presumably non-churchgoers did not read it at all either. As the vernacular text has ceased to be standardised it has become less of a routine to learn certain passages by heart. So the modern diversity of translation and biblical interpretation may mean that effectively the people have 'lost' the Bible as much as they did in the Middle Ages.

[38] *The Story of the Bible Reading Fellowship*, p. 7. This figure is for the UK.

PART IV

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RECEPTION OF THE BIBLE CONFESSIONALLY

25

The Bible in the Orthodox Church from the seventeenth century to the present day

CONSTANTINE SCOUTERIS AND CONSTANTINE BELEZOS

Introduction: Scripture, the church and tradition

Throughout the history of the Eastern Orthodox Church and its theological tradition the Bible has been regarded as the book of the Christian community. It is addressed first and foremost to the members of the church, to believers, and thus scriptural readings are given a central role at every act of worship. There is a concrete reason for this. The compilation of Holy Scripture safeguarded the coherence of the community; it ensured that the body of believers continued to experience apostolic revelation, which had been received by the church as a source and way of life. It should be pointed out here that, in fact, all Orthodox worship is infused with biblical history and tradition: the hymns, the prayers and the liturgical actions.

For the Orthodox the Bible is in itself an enduring proof of faith, a calling to believe, and a testament to the new life that Christ brought into the world. 'These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name' (John 20:31). The New Testament contains the 'signs' which 'Jesus did in the presence of his disciples' and which are the touchstone of the Christian life and form the framework for the life of the Christian communion. Scripture is the very living word of God that has provided the prototype of what is Christian. The life of the community cannot therefore be visualised outside the bounds of Scripture. Throughout the history of Eastern Christendom, Scripture and the church have always been so intertwined that the one could not be conceived of without the other.

A fundamental tenet of Orthodox teaching is that Holy Scripture is the genuine and irrefutable truth: it is the written testament of God's message to humankind and the revelation of the good news of salvation, which the Son of God brought into the world through his *kenosis*. Scripture is living proof that what is for the church a wellspring of faith is not the product of the

human imagination but is 'the mystery of Christ', which 'was revealed by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets' (Eph. 3:4). It was given to the church, but Scripture is not the exclusive possession of the Christian community: it is there for the whole world. As the book of the Christian community it has a catholic and universal significance: it is the book with which the church discourses with the world. It has an essential missionary dimension. It is the cornerstone of the church, through which its faith is made manifest to the world. Through it God reveals himself to the church, and through the church he is revealed to the world.

It is significant that it has always been the understanding of the church, and of the Greek Fathers first and foremost, that the Bible is the book of God's revelation. In this sense divine revelation does not become lost in the past, but through the apostles and Holy Scripture it is made continually present within the church and through the church to the world.

In the theology of the East it is through tradition that divine revelation, which is preserved in Scripture, is made present within every historical circumstance. Tradition is not therefore simply the remembrance of historical experience: it is the living out of the truth that Christ revealed and that is found in the church through the workings of the Holy Spirit. In this sense Scripture and tradition constitute an indivisible whole: they cannot be separated, yet they also cannot be confused. In the history and theology of the East the key to understanding Scripture is tradition, just as the basis of tradition is Scripture, without which it cannot remain true to the faith of the apostles and unchanged by historical events and human experience. Living and lived tradition is not something that undervalues Scripture, but on the contrary it protects Scripture from the arbitrariness of subjectivity, while leaving the interpreter free to make his or her own unique contribution under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In any study of the history of the Bible in terms of Orthodox theology, the importance of the charismatic, as well as historical, dimension of tradition cannot be overlooked. St Paul already refers to the significance of tradition: 'Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle' (2 Thess. 2:15). According to the Orthodox conception it is through church tradition that God's word is preserved, accepted and spread. In other words, tradition is nothing other than the way the church interprets Scripture. This means that the church understands Scripture in the light of tradition, and tradition in the light of Scripture. For the Orthodox Church the Bible and tradition must be understood together as a unified whole. It is the church that is their foundation and starting point; and

again the life of the church is based on Scripture and tradition. This means that the revelatory and charismatic dimensions of Scripture and tradition are lived out within the church, which is itself revelatory and charismatic in character.

The reception of the Bible in the Greek-speaking world

From the time of the fall of Constantinople in 1453 Greek-speaking Orthodox lived within the Ottoman empire. The church found itself in a precarious position, often facing adversity; the study and teaching of theology, and work on the Bible in particular, were inevitably affected. Yet it continued to fulfil its educational role, with Scripture at its heart: it permeated not only worship but also art, monastic and parish life, and church teaching.

These difficult historical conditions in a way forced the church, and more especially the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople, which was responsible for all the Orthodox in the Ottoman empire, to embark on publishing collections of texts from Scripture. Thus the Gospels, Epistles, Psalms and the Menaion service book were published first in Venice and then in Jassy. The Patriarchate founded its own printing house for its own needs under Cyril Lucaris (1572–1638), although this closed after only a year (1627–8). It was re-established under Samuel I Chatzeris in 1767 and Gregory V in 1797.

Many clergymen undertook to expound Scripture in the effort to educate their flocks. Among the more well-known commentators and preachers are Theophanes Eleavoulkos, Damaskenos Studites, Maximos Peloponnessios, Meletios Pegas, Ioannikios Kartanos, Pachomios Roussanos (all in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), Elias Meniates (1669–1714), Kosmas the Aitolian (1714–1779), Nikodemos of Mount Athos (1749–1809), Evgenios Voulgaris (1716–1806), Nikephoros Theotokis (1730–1800), Konstantinos Oikonomos (1780–1857) and many others. Worthy of note are the attempts by some learned clerics who had studied in Europe to interpret the book of Revelation. They linked the visions of John with the hopes and suffering of their people. These include Georgios Koressios (1570–1641), Zacharias Gerganos (d. 1631), Anastasios Gordios (1654/5–1711/29), Anthimos, Patriarch of Jerusalem (1717–1808) and Theodoretos of Ioannina (1740–1823). All these commentators represent what is called the new 'exegetical movement' of the Bible in the Greek-speaking Orthodox world.[1]

[1] Argyriou, 'La Bible dans l'Orthodoxie grecque', pp. 143, 168.

Mention should also be made of translations of the Bible into Turkish using the Greek alphabet, the so-called *karamanlidika*. These were done in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for Orthodox who had adopted the language of their rulers. The Ionian Bible Society, founded in Corfu 1819, produced a New Testament in Albanian with Greek characters. The translation was overseen by the Metropolitan of Euripos (in Euboea) and later of Athens, Gregorios Argyrokastrites (Gregory of Gjirokastra), and it was published in Corfu in 1827.

Before discussing further the issue of translations in the Greek-speaking world, it should be pointed out that the Greeks of course had the New Testament in the original, and that there was and still is not a very great gap between the Koine (common language) of the New Testament and modern Greek.

The question of translating the Greek of the Septuagint and the New Testament into the vernacular arose even as early as the first decades of the seventeenth century, with widespread illiteracy as a major factor. Rendering Scripture into the vernacular was essentially a Protestant idea and enterprise, and indeed Protestants began proselytising in the area in the early 1700s. The fact that the Reformers were in favour of the translation of the Bible made Orthodox especially cautious: they were fearful that the new texts would be used to spread Protestantism.

The proponents of translation argued that the language of the New and Old Testaments was incomprehensible to the majority, and that therefore many people were denied the edifying effects of the word of God. As the Greek professor Christos Androutsos argues, many Orthodox, both clerics and laypeople alike, did not share this view, maintaining that even the most uneducated could understand the historical part of Scripture, or somehow infer the meaning, since there was (and still is) a close relation between modern and Koine Greek.[2] In their opinion, even in translation the deeper meaning of the Gospel and dogmatic matters would still remain unintelligible to those who were not sufficiently knowledgeable. Therefore, according to the opponents of translation, such an undertaking is essentially futile. On the other hand, theological arguments were often used to promote nationalistic ideas, for instance that the original Greek was evidence of the continuity between the ancient and modern Greek language and people.

In the Greek-speaking world the translation question continued to be fiercely debated for another three hundred years, up to the first decades of the

[2] Androutsos, *Dogmatics*, p. 8.

twentieth century. The first modern Greek New Testament was completed between 1629 and 1632 by Maximos Kallipolitis, a hieromonk in the entourage of the then Patriarch of Constantinople Cyril Lucaris. It was published by Protestants in Geneva in 1638, after the deaths of both translator and hierarch. The edition included a recommendatory preface by the prelate, which is of doubtful authenticity.

The publication of this edition sparked an intense controversy between the two sides. When Patriarch Parthenios II (1644–50) disseminated copies, the reaction of the theologian Meletios Syrigos (1586–1663) resulted in the publication of patriarchal encyclicals forbidding the circulation or reading of Scripture in the vernacular.

Kallipolitis's translation was re-published in 1703 in London, with revisions by the former hieromonk Seraphim. At first the Ecumenical Patriarch ordered that all copies be burnt, although within a couple of years, by 1705, this ban had been lifted. The same translation was brought out in other, newly revised versions. Thus, in 1710 it was published in Vienna by Augustus Franke, with revisions by Anastasios Michael from Naousa. Michael's revised translation was published in Leipzig in 1751 in a multilingual edition. It was further revised in 1810 and 1814, in publications by the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) which were favourably received by the ruling Patriarch of Constantinople, Cyril VI. This last edition was re-published in 1817 in St Petersburg by the Russian Bible Society and in 1827 by the Ionian Bible Society.

The gradual liberation of Orthodox peoples in the Balkans from the Turkish yoke brought a new wave of translating activity. The translation of the whole of the Bible by Neophytos Vamvas (1770–1855) is important for historical reasons, even if it is not of great philological merit. It was published by the BFBS over the decade 1833–44. However, it was not well received by the populace, nor did it have official church approval. Most ordinary Greeks were very conservative in their outlook and did not take kindly to change, partly in reaction to the work of Protestant missionaries, and partly as a form of self-defence against the hardships of Turkish rule. This conservatism can be seen in public reaction to the translation of the Gospels by the man of letters Alexandros Pallis (1851–1935). Published in London in 1901, it caused bloody riots in Athens which have gone down in history as the Evangelika.[3] These disturbances forced the government to add a clause to the constitution of 1911 affirming that the wording of the Scriptures should remain unaltered, and that

[3] For further details see Konstantinidis, *The Evangelika*.

any translation must receive the approval of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Autocephalous Church of Greece.

Over the course of the twentieth century, under the influence of the growing ecumenical movement, attitudes towards translating Scripture gradually changed. The translation and exposition of Scripture were used for academic purposes as well as in the pastoral and educational context. During this century there was progressively a greater involvement in and awareness of the scholarship of text-critical scholars, which increasingly has had an impact on biblical studies. There were more than forty translations of parts or the whole of the New Testament alone. Worthy of note is the translation of the Old Testament by Professor Athanasios Chastoupis (Athens, 1954–5). He based his critical revision of the Hebrew original on ancient translations and contemporary research. Two important collaborative translations of the New Testament were made for the BFBS by academics at the Universities of Thessalonica and Athens; both received official church approval. The first of these, by Professors V. Vellas, E. Antoniadis, A. Alivizatos and G. Konidaris, was published in 1967, while the second, by Professors S. Agouridis, P. Vassiliadis, J. Galanis, G. Galitis, J. Karavidopoulos and V. Stogiannos, appeared in 1985. An Old Testament edition translated from the original text into modern Greek was prepared for the BFBS by a team of Greek scholars and published in 1997, while another, new translation from the Septuagint, which is still the official Old Testament text of the Greek Orthodox Church, is soon to be published.

By the end of the twentieth century any vestiges of opposition to the work of the BFBS had gone. A new initiative was set up between the Greek branch of the Society and Orthodox professors of theology, the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Church of Greece. Orthodox Christians now play an active role in its activities, participating in conferences, sitting on the board and even assuming the presidency. All sorts of benefits have come from this collaborative approach, including the increasingly ready availability of Scripture in Greece.

Academic scholarship of Scripture features prominently as part of theological studies in Greece. The main emphasis is on bringing together the patristic tradition with modern research methods.

It is remarkable to note that Scripture has provided a rich source of inspiration for modern Greek writers, including Alexandros Papadiamantis (1851–1911), Kostis Palamas (1859–1943), Constantine Cavafy (1863–1933), Nikos Kazantzakis (1883–1957), George Seferis (1900–71) and Odysseas Elytis (1911–96), the last two of whom were awarded the Nobel Prize for literature and made poetic renditions of the book of Revelation into modern Greek.

The reception of the Bible in the Slavonic context

The brothers Cyril and Methodius, missionaries from Thessalonica, began to preach the Gospel to the Slavs in the ninth century, and their work culminated in the conversion of the Russians in 988. Methodius translated the Bible into Slavonic, devising for the purpose the Glagolitic alphabet and thus laying the foundations for the development of a literary culture among all the different Slavic peoples.

The consciousness of Russia as a Christian nation was gradually formed between the tenth and sixteenth centuries, when the Metropolitan of Moscow was proclaimed Patriarch of all Russia (1589). The first Russian translation of the Bible was made at the end of the fifteenth century, in 1499, partly in an effort to combat the activities of heretical sects. Known as the Novgorod or Gennadius Bible, it was based on the Church Slavonic Bible and the Septuagint.

Maximus the Greek (1480–1556), a monk from Mount Athos, played an important role in shaping the Russian Christian tradition. Invited to Russia to work on and correct biblical and liturgical texts, he translated many books of Scripture, primarily from the Old Testament, and wrote scriptural commentaries, drawing on the rich patristic exegetical tradition.

In 1581 the Great Ostrog Bible, which was based on the Gennadius Bible, was published in south Russia. Used in the fight against Arian tendencies in the church, it signified the continuity of the Byzantine tradition in Russia and was seen as a symbol of national unity. The next landmark was the Bible printed in Moscow in 1663 under Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich. Based on a comparison between the Slavonic and Greek texts, this new edition was accepted by the Old believers as authoritative (it still is the only Bible they use). What is more, it captured the interest of Russians of all social classes, contributing to the emergence of a new spirit in Russian art and to the birth of theatre in Moscow.

In 1707 the Greek brothers Ioannikios and Sophronios Leichoudis undertook to correct the Church Slavonic translation of the Bible. An important edition is the Elizabethan Bible of 1751, printed under Tsarina Elizabeth II. This was based on the Ostrog Bible and the Moscow Bible of 1663, and comparisons were made against the original Hebrew and Greek translations. The text is marked by an overall sense of historical coherence. According to the late Professor George Florovsky (1893–1979) it brings out the biblical dimension of sacred history and lays the foundations for the Russian apperception of what the church is.[4]

[4] Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, in *The Collected Works*, part 1, vol. V, p. 139.

With the spirit of renaissance that predominated in Russia in the eighteenth century came a new interest in Scripture. Many Russian scholars had studied in western Europe, coming under the influence of Pietism. The regenerative movement headed by the Metropolitan of Moscow Platon II (1737–82) and St Tikhon of Zadonsk (1724–82) worked as a counterbalance to this trend. They encouraged a renewed approach to Scripture and patristic writings, seeing them as a living fountain of theology and a true testament of Christian faith.

The nineteenth century saw the great Russian missions from Japan to Alaska, together with equally important translations of Scripture. A significant development was the founding of the Imperial Russian Bible Society in 1812, which functioned as an independent branch of the BFBS. It was met with some measure of suspicion by the clergy and laity, although its work was supported by such important figures as Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow (1782–1867), who had a sound understanding of its aims.

While there was a good deal of controversy during the nineteenth century over translating the Bible, much that was good came of it. Biblical studies in Russia emerged and developed as an academic discipline. Above all, what became clear was that a new translation of the Bible was needed, one that would meet both academic and liturgical requirements. The Holy Synod appointed a committee of professors to work on a new translation, and this Bible was published in 1875. This edition has been reprinted on many occasions subsequently, each time with official church approval.

Nineteenth-century Russia was dominated by great thinkers and literary figures. Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), Nikolai Gogol (1809–52), Feodor Dostoevsky (1821–81) and Vladimir Soloviev (1853–1900) were all inspired by a spirit of renaissance in Russian Orthodoxy and a renewed vibrancy in monastic life – they all had close links to the famous monastery of Optina Pustyn. In responding to the ideas of the Western intelligentsia, they each conveyed something of the spirit of the Christian message and the Bible in their writings.

During this period interest in interpreting the Bible brought also an increased awareness of the teachings of the Church Fathers. The study of theology flourished, especially in the theological academies of Moscow, St Petersburg and Kiev. As a result the church was better able to meet the challenges posed by science and society. Even with the coming of the Soviet period in the twentieth century, this spirit of renewal in Russian theology continued among those in the diaspora. Russian theologians and intellectuals were instrumental in making the theology and thought of the Christian East better known in their new homelands in the West.

In the case of the Serbs, almost all of whom were Orthodox, under Ottoman rule the independent cultural life of the church was severely affected. Thus, while at the beginning of the fifteenth century the dynamic ruler Despot Stefan Lazarevic supported the translation of Greek works and the Bible, which was later printed in Cyrillic, during the centuries that followed there was much less activity of this kind.

During this period it was Russo-Slavonic that was used in Scripture as replacing the Serbo-Slavonic which had been used formerly, partly as a result of Turkish rule and the then close ties between Russia and Serbia. Despite this, in 1564 the books of the prophets were rendered into Serbo-Croat using Latin characters. In the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries monastic centres, and particularly Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos, produced interpretations of Scripture based on patristic and exegetical theology. Exegetical works and homilies were also translated from the Greek. Interest in the study of Scripture influenced the iconography of that time, with biblical figures and scenes featuring prominently.

In 1804 the Bible was once more printed in Cyrillic. However, it is the translation of the New Testament by Vuk Stefanovic Karadzic that is a landmark in the formation of a Serbian literary language. Printed in Vienna in 1847, Karadzic's translation successfully incorporated elements of common folk speech. Equally important was the translation by his pupil Djuro Danicic of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew and the Septuagint. This was published in 1868, with a revised edition appearing in 1932. Another translation of the Old Testament into Serbo-Slavonic had come out in 1861, while in 1933 the complete text of the Bible was printed in Belgrade using Latin characters.

The Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, to which the majority of Bulgarians belong, also suffered under Turkish rule during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, and very little neo-Bulgarian literature was produced during this period. The main literary form was the sermon, and of the anthologies published in Bulgarian, the so-called Damaskini are the best known; these contained translated homilies of the Greek clergyman and scholar Damaskenos Studites (d. 1577). In 1806 the first book in Bulgarian was published, a *Kyriakodromion*, a collection of sermons and scriptural readings for each Sunday of the year, which had been translated from the Greek by the Bishop of Vratza, Sophronios (1794–1803). Apart from these didactic works the only other books available to Orthodox Bulgarians were in either Greek or Russian.

The monk Neophytos Rilski (1793–1881) translated the New Testament into Bulgarian. He also wrote the first Bulgarian grammar, and it was his work that established the modern tongue as a literary language. The first translation of

the Old Testament, from the original Hebrew, was printed in instalments in Bucharest between 1862 and 1864. In 1891 the Holy Synod of the Church of Bulgaria appointed a committee to oversee its revision, and it was only published in full in Sofia in 1925.

The reception of the Bible in Romania

The Orthodox Church of Romania traces its roots back to the first century CE, when Christianity was first brought to the land of the ancient Dacians. For many centuries it came under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the main language of the church was the Greek of the New Testament and the Fathers, as well as Latin. After the fifteenth century, however, for historical reasons Church Slavonic gradually began replacing Greek. Thus, up until the seventeenth century most of the liturgical books in use in Romania and Moldavia were printed in Slavonic, many more than in Greek. In fact, the oldest written records in Romanian and Moldavian are written using the Cyrillic alphabet.

Historical events, Protestant and Catholic missionary activity and the will of the local ruling princes all propelled the cause of establishing Romanian as a liturgical language. Its use in worship was officially sanctioned in 1713, and this historical development can be traced back to the translation of Scripture. The earliest extant manuscripts and printed texts date from the sixteenth century, and these include the Psalms, the Gospels and the Epistles in Romanian and Slavo-Romanian, as well as the well-known Protestant translation of the first two books of the Old Testament, the Palia de la Orăştie (1582).

The first Romanian New Testament, which was based on the Greek and Church Slavonic texts, was the initiative of Simion Stefan, Metropolitan of Transylvania (1643–56). This was the Belgrade New Testament in the Cyrillic alphabet (Noul Testament de la Bălgrad), published in Alba Iulia in 1648. Simion Stefan also published the Psalms in 1651 in Alba Iulia, using the Cyrillic alphabet. The complete Bible in Romanian was first published in 1688 with the support of Princes Şerban Cantacuzinos (1679–88) and Constantin Prâncoveanu (1688–1714). This, the Bucharest Bible (Biblia de la Bucureşti) as it is known, was translated and prepared by the Romanian brothers Radu and Serba Greceanu, Mitrofan, Bishop of Husi and Buzău, the Stolnic Constantin Cantacuzinos and other scholars of Greek descent, such as Germanos, Metropolitan of Nyssa, and Sebastos Kyminetes, and it received the blessing of the learned Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem (1641–1707). The same

Bible has been re-edited many times, in Blaj in 1795 (the Blaj Bible or the Bible of Samuil Micu), in St Petersburg in 1819 (the St Petersburg Bible, with the support of the Russian Bible Society), in Buzău in 1854–6 (the Buzău Bible), in Sibiu in 1856–8 (the Şaguna Bible), and in Bucharest in 1914 and 1988. It is considered one of the most important cultural landmarks of the seventeenth century, and it became a symbol of linguistic and national unity in Romania.

Individual books of the Bible were also translated, of which mention should be made of that of the Psalms in rhyming verse by Dosoftei, Metropolitan of Moldavia (d. 1693), in 1673, and those of the Gospels and *Apostolos* (readings from the Epistles and the Acts) by Teodosie, Metropolitan of Walachie (1668–72, 1679–1708), in 1682 and 1683.

From the eighteenth century onwards many translations of the complete Bible were made. These include among others the Iaşi Bible of 1865, which was reprinted in many editions between 1893 and 1956. A translation sponsored by the BFBS was published in 1873, while the first Bible to be authorised by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Romania was brought out in 1914. Another important edition, published in 1936, was that of Gala Galaction and Vasile Radu, two biblical scholars who had been appointed by Patriarch Miron Cristea, and who based their translation on the Hebrew text and the Septuagint. The scholars subsequently revised their original translation, basing their new work on the critical editions of the Hebrew original and Septuagint. This new 1938 edition was, like that of 1688, called the Bucharest Bible. Patriarch Nicodim also undertook a translation, which was authorised by the Holy Synod and came out in 1944.

These last three editions formed the basis for Bibles published with the approval of the Holy Synod in 1968, 1972, 1975 and 1982. In 1988 a new edition of the Bible of 1688 came out, published in collaboration with the United Bible Societies, an initiative instigated by Patriarch Teoctist. In 2001 the Holy Synod brought out its Jubilee edition, with revisions by the Archbishop (now Metropolitan) of Cluj, Bartolomeu Valeriu Anania.

From the eighteenth century onwards many editions of the New Testament were brought out (in 1703, 1817, 1819, 1838, 1854, 1867, 1886, 1911, 1921, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1938, 1942, 1945, 1951, 1979, 1992 and 1993). Other books of Scripture were also published individually in translations by Catholics and Protestants as well as Orthodox Christians.

Finally, in 1992 the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Patriarchate began preparing an ecumenical translation of Scripture into Romanian.

The reception of the Bible in Georgia

The history of Christianity in the kingdom of Iberia is linked to the missionary activity of St Nina, who was from Cappadocia (third–fourth centuries). It was accorded autocephalous status in the fifth century by the Patriarchate of Antioch, and in 1990 it was recognised as a patriarchate by the Ecumenical Patriarch. Its geographical position meant that it had close ties with Armenia, and for many centuries with Byzantium. It also had links with Persia, and later Turkey and Russia. Western and eastern Georgia were incorporated into the Russian empire at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, partly so that it could be protected from threatened Turkish occupation. Georgia finally became independent after the fall of communism in the late twentieth century.

The translation of the Gospels into Georgian, a language that is close to Sumerian, in the fifth century was based on early Syro-Armenian versions. The next translations of the New Testament were influenced by the Greek texts. This development came as result of the work of monastics in Tao-Klarjeti (in south-west Georgia), and at the Monastery of Iviron on Mount Athos, and particularly of St George (Giorgi) the Athonite (1009–65), which is the main text used by the Church of Georgia until the present day. The contribution of the Monastery of St Catherine on Sinai was also significant. Many translations of interpretations of the Bible, as well as those of the whole Bible into Georgian, are connected with St Euthymius the Athonite (955–1028).[5] With regard to the translation of the Old Testament the source text was always the Septuagint.

The first printed version of Scripture was published in 1709 in Tblisi. This was the first edition of the New Testament, which appeared under the auspices of King Wakhtang VI. The text used was the translation by St George the Athonite. This text was also the main basis for the translation produced by the BFBS in 1912. In 1743 attempts were made to revise the old translations of Holy Scripture according to the Slavonic text, under Prince Wakuset. This edition was reprinted in Moscow 1816 and in St Petersburg in 1818. In 1953–4 the BFBS embarked on a programme of translating the New Testament into modern Georgian. It also drew on the rich tradition of earlier translations in manuscript. In more recent times many scholars have undertaken comparative studies of the Georgian Bible text.

In 1974 the Stockholm Institute for Bible Translation undertook to translate the New Testament, which resulted in a provisional edition by Professors Zurab

[5] Lang, 'Recent Work', pp. 83–7, 90.

Kiknadze and Malchaz Songulasvili, and an edition of the New Testament and Psalms in 1982 (reprinted in 1991). Between 1989 and 1990 the Old Testament was published in four volumes, carried out in the main by the same scholars, while the Deuterocanonical books were translated by Bacana Bregvadz. In 1989 the Patriarchate of Georgia brought out the first translation of the Bible in modern Georgian. The Old Testament text is based on the original and the Septuagint.

From the nineteenth century onwards Georgian writers were greatly influenced by the Bible. Among these is Jakob Gogebashvili (1840–1912), the author of 'Divine History', a selection of biblical stories that was used for teaching in schools in the 1990s. At the same time, Georgian and foreign scholars began to study the links between translations of the Bible and literature and the extent to which scriptural translations influenced Georgian letters.[6]

The reception of the Bible in the Arabic-speaking world

Most Arabic-speaking Orthodox Christians belong to the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, with Antioch containing the greatest number.

Of the various translations of the Bible made in the Arab Orthodox context the efforts of the monks of the Monastery of Balamand stand out as significant. They began their work of translating and publishing Scripture in the early eighteenth century. Although at first Orthodox, when the monks became Uniate they founded a community in the village of Khounchara on Mount Lebanon, called the Choueiry Brotherhood. The monks revised the Arabic lectionaries and older translations of the Gospels and the *Apostolos*; the revised text came to be known as the Choueiry edition. At first taken up by the Uniates in the region, it was subsequently also adopted by the Orthodox Church and used in its services, since it was the most authoritative edition of the liturgical biblical texts.

During the nineteenth century various attempts were made to further improve the Choueiry translation, the most important of which was the edition published by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 1865.

In the early twentieth century the Choueiry translation was revised once again, more perhaps because the need for an authoritative Arabic Bible had arisen than in reaction to non–Orthodox-sponsored translations. The foreword

[6] E.g. Birdsall, *Collected Writings*.

to the edition by the scholar Wehbtallah Sarrouf bears the date 19 January 1903. Sarrouf states that he consulted the Van Dycke Arabic Bible of 1865, which had been produced in collaboration with the American Bible Society, as well as the 1877 translation of the Jesuits (although he must have meant the Dominicans), comparing them, as well as the Choueiry Bible, against the Greek text. His main concern was to produce a good translation that would both read well in Arabic and remain faithful to the original, and indeed his language is marked by its elegance and accuracy of expression.

Among Orthodox Arabs it is the Van Dycke translation that is still the most widely used and read. This may be because its language and vocabulary are closely akin to that of Orthodox services, as has been pointed out by the professor of theology Father Ayoub Chahwan. Although the Van Dycke Bible has met the needs of Arab-speaking Orthodox until now, many biblical scholars feel that the time has come to embark upon a new translation. Work has already begun at the University of Balamand in Lebanon in collaboration with the Bible Society in Beirut, with a view to produce a new Van Dycke translation of the whole Scripture, that would be approved by Orthodox Arabs.

Instead of an epilogue

In this modern age of communications and rapid scientific development, the chief concern of the Orthodox Church throughout the world is to make Holy Scripture accessible to all the faithful. This is made possible not only through numerous editions, but also through sermons and the pastoral work of the church. A characteristic example of this attitude is reflected in the words of a modern-day Orthodox ascetic, Elder Porphyrios of Mount Athos (1906–91):

> That's why I want you to devote yourselves more to the study of the Old and New Testament and to the hymns and poetic canons. Read the Church Fathers with the same zeal that you would read the hymns and the poetic canons, but first of all read Holy Scripture. Read the Gospel and the Old Testament. This is the treasure-house, because all the Fathers drew on this wealth. It is the source and the foundation. It is inexhaustible and you can never weary of it. You will undoubtedly feel too what the Psalmist says: *Your words are above honey to my mouth*. He doesn't say '*like honey*', but '*above honey to my mouth*', in order to indicate the exceptional sweetness of the words of God.[7]

[7] Elder Porphyrios [Bairaktaris] of Kafsokalivia, in *Wounded by Love: The Life and Wisdom of Elder Porphyrios* (Limni of Evia: Editions Denise Harvey, 2005), pp. 164–5.

26

The reception of the Bible in Roman Catholic tradition

PETER NEUNER
TRANSLATED BY LINDA ARCHIBALD

The reception of the Council of Trent in the baroque sermon

When the reformers began to use the Scripture as a critical norm to flush out biases and problems in the development of the church, the Catholic Church was prompted to reflect on the question of its own position on the authority of the Bible. How could it be possible to criticise the church using references from Scripture? The answer to this question which had been given by the Council of Trent was a defensive one in the first instance:

> Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall – in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, – wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church, – whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures, – hath held and doth hold; or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.[1]

This decree was directed at the reformers in the first instance, but it was also applied within the Roman Catholic domain where it was likewise forbidden for anyone to 'wrest the sacred Scripture to his own senses'. The Council of Trent had set out a number of very strict instructions which outlawed the preaching of indulgences and all the financial interests that went along with them. It had even been suggested that the task of interpreting Scripture in the homily should be reserved for those with higher qualifications, and forbidden

[1] The Council of Trent document text in English is available at http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/ct04.html; this translation is from Heinrich Denzinger, *Kompendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen: Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, ed. Peter Hünermann, 43rd edn. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2010) (henceforth DH) 1507.

to clerics and lay people who had not completed special training. Above all, the liturgy had to remain faithful to Scripture and it was to contain nothing extra beyond the prescribed prayers and the text of the Bible. This meant that the sermon was taken out of the liturgy and it either took place before the celebration of the mass or was relegated to a separate service dedicated to the preaching of the Scripture. This service was celebrated from the chancel, and not from the altar, and the preacher had to remove his ceremonial chasuble beforehand. The intention was to prevent the preacher's own opinions from having any place in the celebration of the mass and to let the word of God stand supreme. Despite the fact that preachers did make an effort to clarify the text and relate it to experience, through baroque sermons and especially in the religious theatre of the Baroque period, they were nevertheless very much concerned to remain true to the Scripture and demonstrated this in their frequent use of quotations from the Bible.

The interpretation of the Scripture may not, according to the Council of Trent, be carried out in a way that conflicts with the sense of Scripture laid down by the church. This begs the question: what is the church? The Council did not pursue this question for fear of re-awakening the old dispute over conciliarism. The term 'church' does not mean here the church hierarchy or an official magisterium, but rather it refers to the sense of the faith which the whole community of the church has, and especially the understanding that was held by the early church. The guiding principle for the proclamation of the faith was envisaged as the complete tradition, as recognised in the church. Interpretations of Scripture were not permitted to go against this accepted tradition. This church tradition is, however, a very broad stream. The Council's decree is in the negative, that the Scripture may not be interpreted in a way which contradicts the tradition of the church, and it leaves open more room for manoeuvre than the requirement of the First Vatican Council which decreed that the Scripture must be understood in accordance with the specific interpretation laid down by the church or in some cases by the magisterium. Furthermore, the Council of Trent's requirement applied only to conformity with the sense of the church in terms of faith and practice, and made no reference to matters of scientific interest such as, for example, the creation myths.

It is quite clear that the Council intended in this decree to ensure that the Scripture remained within the church and was not used in principle as a separate standard which could be set up in opposition to the church. The Council guaranteed that church and Scripture would remain bound to each other by consolidating the tradition of the church alongside the written sources of revelation as being both divinely revealed by God, determining that 'truth and discipline are

contained in the written books, and the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down even unto us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand'.[2] So it was that tradition, as it appears in the living faith of the church, joined with Scripture to provide the source of theological understanding. This point was subsequently to be the cause of innumerable debates with the reformed churches which countered this decree with the *sola scriptura* principle and regarded Scripture as the sole source of authority.

The Enlightenment and the emergence of historical-critical exegesis

A historical way of thinking started with the Enlightenment and came to prominence in the course of the nineteenth century. Numerous sources were discovered and edited, and the foundations of historical knowledge were considerably expanded. Most importantly of all, there was a change of perspective. The starting point for reflection on reality changed from being things as they are, or the consideration of the nature of a thing or an event, to being things as they have become. Broadly speaking, what followed was 'a *reductio in historiam*, whereby the historical character of all phenomena was grasped, existence was recognised as a state of having become and it was examined as it continued in this process of becoming'.[3] This awareness of history is part of the larger paradigm of historicism, which considers everything as having been created at one particular time, and which regards everything as contingent, changeable and relative. Everything that is has become so, could have become somewhat different than it is, and no doubt will undergo change at some point in the future. Absolutely nothing can escape from this historical consciousness. According to Ernst Troeltsch, this historicist approach meant 'the end of dogmatic conceptualisation',[4] an approach which had been based on principles which were beyond history, due to the fact that they were revealed, and therefore universally valid.

It was the Enlightenment that ushered in this historical way of thinking. Reimarus subjected the biblical accounts to a purely historical examination and came to some scathing conclusions about the apostolic record and the

[2] DH 1501.

[3] Joseph Ratzinger, *Das Problem der Dogmengeschichte in der Sicht der katholischen Theologie* (Cologne and Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1966), p. 7.

[4] Ernst Troeltsch, *Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte* (Munich and Hamburg: Siebenstern, 1969 [1902]), pp. 29 f.

development of Christian dogma. It suddenly became clear, as Lessing put it, that the 'ugly great ditch of history' separates us from the biblical texts and prevents us from understanding them. Theologians from the liberal Protestant side faced up to this challenge. They soon found, however, that the events described in the Scriptures seemed to belong to a strange and distant past. Whereas faith sought in the figure of Jesus of Nazareth an encounter and a close relationship, this kind of study placed him in a time, place and culture that was largely out of reach. In the works of Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860) and David Friedrich Strauss (1808–74) Scripture no longer appeared to be addressed directly to the believer, but now had become an extremely complex text which had emerged through a confusing process, written from a view of the world that is not the same as ours, and in images and myths that appear strange to us.

Biblical exegesis played a very important part in the development of the historical-critical method largely because of its historical approach to the study of Scripture. This method leaves the text in its own time and opposes it to the contemporary teaching and practice of the church. Because of its origins in the Enlightenment it takes a critical position in relation to the church on principle and is seen as 'an advocate for the strangeness of our basic scriptures'.[5] This way of thinking did not approach the Scripture as a revelation of supernatural truths but rather used it and its strangeness to ask critical questions of the contemporary church, and it represented a considerable challenge to the church. Broad circles in Evangelical theology opposed these claims and insisted on remaining true to Protestant orthodoxy.

The historical thinking of the nineteenth century has left its mark on Catholic theology too, and historical documents were edited and researched in great numbers. Ignaz von Döllinger was the most significant of these supporters of historically defined theology. For many years, however, it was forbidden in Catholic circles to use these methods of historical criticism on the Holy Scriptures, or regard them as historical documents. One scholar, Richard Simon (1638–1712), did realise that the biblical texts were written records of earlier oral traditions and that therefore there was a tradition that predated Scripture. He argued against the Protestant principle of the clarity of Scripture and wanted to demonstrate that the Scripture is not at all clear, or self-explanatory, but on the contrary is a highly complex construction which requires authentic interpretation if it is to become clear. In his defence of the

[5] Martin Ebner, 'Grundoptionen der historisch-kritischen Exegese', *Zur Debatte* 5:38 (2008), pp. 7–9 at p. 7.

church and its function as interpreter of Scripture, Simon thought that the historical-critical method was in fact the genuine Catholic method. This viewpoint did not prevail, however, since it was evidently before its time.

The First Vatican Council (1869/70)

The Council of Trent's decrees on church tradition were often interpreted later as if they meant that oral tradition was a second, independent source of revelation alongside Scripture. Particularly in the nineteenth century, when conservatives dominated the offices of the church, there was an interest in making the compulsory teachings of the faith as full as possible and to 'enlarge' the core doctrines of faith, and this led to an emphasis on the traditions which were not written down. This issue became acute when the dogma of the immaculate conception of Mary was proclaimed in 1854. Evidence for this could not be found in the Scriptures and so it was sought in oral tradition, which was cited as a revelatory kind of evidence. The Scripture was insufficient on its own and tradition was therefore necessary. This emphasis on oral transmission legitimised the development of Christian dogma.

This understanding of Scripture and tradition became especially apparent at the First Vatican Council of 1869/70. This Council formulated two decrees: one on the Catholic Faith and the other on the Pope. The decree on the Catholic Faith was based on the Council of Trent, and cites the portion of that Council quoted above, before bringing in a few changes which reflect a new aspect. In this case the decree reads:

> Now since the decree on the interpretation of Holy Scripture, profitably made by the Council of Trent, with the intention of constraining rash speculation, has been wrongly interpreted by some, we renew that decree and declare its meaning to be as follows: that in matters of faith and morals, belonging as they do to the establishing of Christian doctrine, that meaning of Holy Scripture must be held to be the true one, which Holy mother Church held and holds, since it is her right to judge of the true meaning and interpretation of Holy Scripture. In consequence, it is not permissible for anyone to interpret Holy Scripture in a sense contrary to this, or indeed against the unanimous consent of the fathers.[6]

This text adds considerable reinforcement to the decrees of the Council of Trent. Above all, the context is different: the Council of Trent had the aim of

[6] DH 3007. The First Vatican Council text in English is available at www.ewtn.com/library/COUNCILS/V1.htm and also at /www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum20.htm.

pushing through reform and suppressing overimaginative types of preaching. In this case the intention was to issue a dogmatic declaration which accorded the text a completely different status. The Council of Trent saw the teachings of the church in its entirety as the norm against which Scripture should be understood, whereas in the First Vatican Council the magisterium takes on this crucial role. While the Council of Trent framed its conclusion in the negative, stating that Scripture may not be interpreted in a way that is contrary to the traditional faith of the church, the First Vatican Council set up a positive requirement that interpretations must be in agreement with the rulings made by the magisterium. This means that the magisterium issues the correct interpretation and all exegesis has to follow this line. This is no longer a general exhortation in the negative, to keep within the bounds of tradition, but a positive stipulation which lays down how a text has to be interpreted.[7]

This more stringent ruling led to a number of consequences within the Council itself. In the debate on the dogma of papal infallibility Döllinger, the strongest critic of this decision of the magisterium, invoked the fact that according to Catholic doctrine, as defined by the Council of Trent, the interpretation of Scripture must be done in such a way that it agrees with the tradition of the church. He pointed out that in the early church, not one of the Church Fathers had interpreted the Scriptures in the sense that the dogmas regarding the Pope now did. This meant, in his view, that the dogma of the universal primacy of the Pope and that of his infallibility amounted to a break with the tradition of the church and therefore also a breach of the Council of Trent's decisions and a departure from its reliance on tradition. When Pope Pius IX was confronted with this statement he is said to have remarked 'La tradizione son io!' (I am the tradition). Even though care must be taken to avoid placing too much importance on a statement made in a moment of agitation, these words nevertheless do imply an understanding of church tradition which claims an entitlement for the decrees of the magisterium to stand alongside the Scriptures, rather than the previous view which had placed the Scripture as the *norma normans* in relation to the decrees of the magisterium.

The modernist controversy and its consequences

In the nineteenth century conservative forces dominated the Catholic Church and its theology. Around this time there was also a great controversy between the liberal and orthodox factions of Protestant theology over the place of

[7] On this point see Kern and Niemann, *Theologische Erkenntnislehre*, pp. 92–6.

historical-critical exegesis, and this served as a deterrent for Roman Catholic theologians, making them disinclined to pursue the matter. One attempt was made, however, when at the turn of the twentieth century Alfred Loisy (1857–1940) tried to introduce this method into Catholic theology. This move was to bring about the modernist controversy, which was probably the most serious crisis that the church had faced since the Reformation. This conflict was to have a marked influence on the status of Scripture within the church over many decades.

Alfred Loisy was introduced to the biblical criticism of liberal Protestant exegesis through the work of Ernest Renan (1823–92), who was critical of religion. As a Catholic theologian he was driven by the idea of 'one day defeating Renan with his own weapons'.[8] One particular challenge presented itself in the form of Adolf von Harnack and his work on 'The essence of Christianity'. Harnack presented a figure of Jesus that was modelled on the typical bourgeois ideals of the late imperial period with its individualism and belief in progress. His work endorsed this worldview and gave it religious legitimacy. The essence of Christianity appeared to Harnack to lie in Jesus himself, with his preaching of the fatherhood of God, the infinite value of the human soul, and the commandment of unconditional love for one's neighbour. The preaching of Jesus was directed at the inner self in the first instance, and it is here that the kingdom of God would come into being: 'In the combination of these ideas – God the Father, Providence, the position of men as God's children, the infinite value of the human soul – the whole Gospel is expressed.'[9] The essence of Christianity and the system of Catholicism are, in Harnack's view, mutually exclusive entities. In Harnack's opinion Roman Catholicism 'has nothing to do with the Gospel, nay, is in fundamental contradiction with it'.[10]

This frontal attack on the Catholic Church prompted Loisy's book entitled *L'Évangile et l'Église*.[11] He also takes the historical Jesus and his proclamation of the kingdom of God as his starting point. For Loisy it is not only the original message of Jesus that is Christian, but everything that has since emerged and grown out of this proclamation of the kingdom of God: 'For the historian, everything by which the gospel continues to live is Christian.'[12] In his view

[8] Alfred Loisy, *Choses passées* (Paris: Emile Nourry, 1913), p. 66.
[9] Adolf von Harnack, *What is Christianity?*, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1901), p. 68.
[10] Harnack, *What is Christianity?*, p. 264.
[11] Alfred Loisy, *L'Évangile et l'Église* was first published in Paris in 1902. It was revised in an extended edition in Paris in 1903 and this version was translated into English as *The Gospel and the Church* by Christopher Home, from which the quotations here are taken.
[12] Loisy, *The Gospel and the Church*, pp. 139–40.

the whole of the rest of history must be considered as well, because it is only in the later course of history that it is possible to discern what was contained in the message of Jesus like a tiny seed corn. It is only by looking at the whole of history that it becomes possible to form an accurate picture of what Christianity is. According to Loisy it was inevitable that Christian hope in the kingdom of God would take a new form once it was clear that the immediate expectations that had originally sprung up around the historical Jesus were not going to be fulfilled. Loisy's idea of the phenomenon of far-reaching historical change was linked with the ideas of John Henry Newman, and especially with Newman's theory of development. Following this line of thinking, changes in the development of history are not to be understood as a falling away from the original position, but rather they are a necessary condition which must occur if the gospel is to remain alive in a fundamentally different intellectual world. This is the main theme of *L'Évangile et l'Église*. Loisy's idea of development out of inner necessity is not an abandonment of Jesus but rather is a precondition for the ongoing vitality of his message throughout history. Historical 'having-become-ness' out of inner necessity, and as a reaction to the challenges of changing times and culture, is presented by Loisy as proof of the legitimacy of any particular development. *L'Évangile et l'Église* used Newman's theory of development and became a historical apologia for the Catholic Church and its system of doctrines.

Loisy's explanations regarding the development of the church played a significant part in the modernist controversy. He demonstrated how the church as an institution proceeded, and had to proceed, in many small steps out of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God:

> There is nowhere in her history any gap in continuity, or the absolute creation of a new system: every step is a deduction from the preceding, so that we can proceed from the actual constitution of the Papacy to the Evangelical Society around Jesus, different as they are from one another, without meeting any violent revolution to change the government of the Christian community.[13]

Loisy maintained along with Harnack that the historical Jesus did not set out in the beginning to found a formally constituted church. He did, however, proclaim the kingdom of God, and out of this proclamation the church proceeded, as a matter of necessity:

> Jesus foretold the kingdom, and it was the Church that came; she came, enlarging the form of the gospel, which was impossible to preserve as it

[13] Loisy, *The Gospel and the Church*, p. 165.

> was, as soon as the Passion closed the ministry of Jesus. . . . The view of the kingdom has been enlarged and modified, the conception of its definite advent fills a smaller place, but the object of the gospel remains the object of the Church.[14]

This text had attempted to represent the church as the legitimate and indispensable consequence of the proclamation of Jesus, but the later controversies only took note of one sentence: 'Jesus foretold the kingdom, and it was the Church that came.' This sentence was interpreted to mean that the proclamation of Jesus and the church contradicted each other, which was not at all the meaning that Loisy had intended.

The church authorities were in no way prepared for this kind of challenge. In their view Scripture was not a historical document, but a miraculously revealed and holy text. They understood it to contain eternal truths which brought salvation to all mankind, and believed it to be just as valid today as it was and would be in all other times. Any attempt to study it with the techniques of historical criticism, to divide it up into separate sources and to discover errors in the attribution of parts to particular writers, appeared to them to be an affront against God, who vouches for the truth of Scripture. In 1892 Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* had allowed considerable leeway for exegesis; but with reference to Scripture itself he declared:

> For all the books which the Church receives as sacred and canonical, are written wholly and entirely, with all their parts, at the dictation of the Holy Ghost; and so far is it from being possible that any error can co-exist with inspiration, that inspiration not only is essentially incompatible with error, but excludes and rejects it as absolutely and necessarily as it is impossible that God Himself, the supreme Truth, can utter that which is not true. This is the ancient and unchanging faith of the Church.[15]

This understanding of the Bible as being free from all errors was not compatible with Loisy's criticisms.

> The Bible's freedom from errors cannot encompass the absolute truth of its whole content and all of its statements. A book which is absolutely true for all times and for all levels of truth is just as impossible as a four cornered triangle. . . . The Bible is an old book, a book that was written by human beings for human beings, in times and circumstances which are very far from what we would call scientific. The errors of the Bible are nothing other than the

[14] Loisy, *The Gospel and the Church*, pp. 166, 168.

[15] DH 3292 f., available at www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18111893_providentissimus-deus_en.html.

> relative and imperfect features of a book, which precisely because it is a book, must necessarily have some relative and imperfect features.[16]

Conflict was therefore inevitable.

In the decree *Lamentabili Sane* of 3 July 1907 and in the encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* of 8 September of the same year, the theories of Loisy were roundly condemned and judged to be part of modernism, a movement which Pope Pius X felt obliged to destroy. He saw in modernism an international conspiracy that was designed to rock the church to its foundations, at first in the domain of exegesis but then also further afield in areas such as the philosophy of religion, mysticism, literature and social welfare, perceiving that it had already established bridgeheads in the inner circles of the church and even in the church hierarchy. The second part of the encyclical takes the form of a number of practical measures to be taken against modernism, and this leads ultimately to the Oath against Modernism of 1910. The consequence was that for several decades it was practically impossible for anyone in the Catholic Church to defend the historical-critical position. Exegetes were banished to a far corner, and only allowed to explore minor issues that were deemed to pose no major threat. Exegesis itself in this context was perceived as an adjunct to dogmatics. The agenda was set by dogmatics, so that exegesis and the history of dogmatics together had to come up with *dicta probantia*, or 'proof texts', which meant in practice that they had to assemble quotations which proved that the recognised doctrine of the church had been believed and taught from the beginning, and that it was all founded on Scripture. Collections of single passages from Scripture, the Church Fathers and other authoritative sources were put together, with very little reference to their original context, showing the same item of dogma appearing again and again. The sole purpose of this activity was to provide evidence for what 'has always been' the church position. This method of exegesis is known also by the dismissive term 'quarrying'. Dogma provides the blueprint and then small pieces are carved out of the Bible and the Church Fathers and assembled in such a way that they construct the system that is laid down by the magisterium. Even when ultramontanist historians worked on source texts and added to the sum of historical knowledge, their devotion to this narrow approach meant that their work could be not considered a proper part of the full bloom of historical thinking which was happening at that time. There was already an inherent conflict of

[16] Translated following Friedrich Heiler, *Der Vater des katholischen Modernismus* (Munich: Erasmus, 1947).

approach between the exegetes and the neo-scholastics, and these conflicts became more and more frequent.

In the course of the tensions over modernism the papal Bible Commission made dogmatic rulings on the historicity of Scripture, the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the authorship of the fourth Gospel, the historical character of the book of Genesis, the authorship of the Psalms, the synoptic question and the authorship of the Letter to the Hebrews. These decisions caused a great deal of head shaking in the academic world; but much more than that, those who spoke up against them had to deal with some very far-reaching personal consequences, and Catholic exegesis was widely denounced as irrelevant.

Signs of a breakthrough emerged in the 1943 encyclical of Pope Pius XII entitled *Divino Afflante Spiritu*.[17] This encyclical endorses the use of the Vulgate as opposed to the use of the original Scripture languages but states also that 'its authority is not specified primarily as critical, but rather as juridical'.[18] This means that there is indeed a need for academic study of the original texts. The encyclical makes it clear that it is necessary to distinguish between the different literary genres and it promotes the freedom of scholarship, precisely in those areas which pose difficult questions. It is critical of an attitude which 'imagines that whatever is new should for that very reason be opposed or suspected'.[19] The historical-critical method is thus enjoined upon the exegetes as an obligation, not as a historical and philological enterprise in isolation, but in conjunction with theological dogma. This encyclical represents a turning point in Catholic exegesis. Despite all of these concessions, Pope Pius XII still maintained the principle that the magisterium is the authentic interpreter of Scripture and that its interpretation must take place in accordance with the church's authorised and obligatory teaching. The Pope therefore wrote in the encyclical *Humani Generis* (1950):[20] 'This sacred Office of Teacher in matters of faith and morals must be the proximate and universal criterion of truth for all theologians, since to it has been entrusted by Christ Our Lord the whole deposit of faith – Sacred Scripture and divine Tradition – to be preserved, guarded and interpreted.'[21] Research into the sources of revelation, that is

[17] Available at www.bible-researcher.com/divinoafflante.html.
[18] DH 825.
[19] DH 3831.
[20] Available at www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_12081950_humani-generis_en.html.
[21] DH 3884.

to say into both Scripture and tradition, is essential but it cannot take place independently of the magisterium because

> together with the sources of positive theology God has given to His Church a living Teaching Authority to elucidate and explain what is contained in the deposit of faith only obscurely and implicitly. This deposit of faith our Divine Redeemer has given for authentic interpretation not to each of the faithful, not even to theologians, but only to the Teaching Authority of the Church. But if the Church does exercise this function of teaching . . . either in the ordinary or in the extraordinary way, it is clear how false is a procedure which would attempt to explain what is clear by means of what is obscure. Indeed the very opposite procedure must be used.[22]

This means that the obscurity of the Scriptures, using a term which runs counter to the position of the reformers, must be interpreted by means of the clear declarations of dogma which are beyond time and in need of no further elucidation. The only direct and authentic witness is the magisterium. It is therefore not possible on principle for Scripture to be used to question the magisterium. This is what led to the understanding that exegesis and the history of dogma, the church and theology were all relegated to a secondary place, designed to serve as an adjunct to dogmatics. The often bitter controversies between exegesis and the magisterium, and sometimes also between exegesis and dogmatics, were by no means resolved during the pontificate of Pius XII.

A new opportunity to resolve these matters was to be forthcoming in the Second Vatican Council. In the meantime, however, there were still some theological preparations to be made in terms of the tension between Scripture and tradition, and of the way that inspiration was to be understood.

Theological work on denominational controversies

The doctrine of inspiration

The church's teaching on inspiration is classically formulated in the First Vatican Council where it states that the books of the Bible were authored by God: 'Deum habent auctorem.'[23] It has never been doubted that the books of the Bible were written by human beings. How can we conceive of this authorship of God which is at the same time authorship by human beings? There are two basic theories on this point: verbal inspiration and real inspiration.

[22] DH 3886.
[23] DH 3006.

The traditional concept of verbal inspiration envisages the Holy Ghost dictating the text and the human author acting simply as a tool through which God wrote down his message. This same concept of verbal inspiration was held by orthodox Protestants, and it is still to be found in some fundamentalist groups. This idea can be found also in the arts, since many paintings show the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at the shoulder of the sacred writer, telling him what to write. The contrasting idea of real inspiration was initiated by the Jesuit scholar Leonhard Lessius (1554–1623). In his view, a book that was written by human effort could become Holy Scripture, if the Holy Spirit later confirmed that there was nothing false in it. According to Lessius inspiration means a subsequent approval of the contents, and this was understood as *inspiratio subsequens.*

Neither of these concepts can fully explain the idea of double authorship, and a third idea, which has now become a classic concept, was advanced by Karl Rahner. He formulated it in 1958, before anyone had even thought of the Second Vatican Council. The sacred writers are real authors, and not just secretaries, and they write using their own powers and skills: 'They are no less the authors of their work than are other writers. The divine authorship is not in competition with human authorship and the latter is not curtailed, nor reduced to a merely secretarial function.'[24] This formulation rejects the idea of verbal inspiration, as well as that of an *inspiratio subsequens* which denies that God is the author in the first instance.

Rahner understands the idea of authorship among the sacred writers in the context of the founding of the early church. His view is that the early church has 'a unique and irreplaceable function for the whole future history of the Church'.[25] All later forms of the church are based upon this original formation, and any tradition that is passed down can only ever be the transmission of that which was already there in the beginning:

> God therefore founds the Church in two ways: He does this by constantly preserving it, and he also preserves it through the fact that He founded it once only and at one particular time. God's role in the foundation of the Church is a demonstration of a qualitatively unique relationship which existed between God and the first generation of the Church and which does not persist in the same way through later generations. . . . The early Church is not just the generation that chronologically pre-dates all others, but it is the constant foundation and the continuing norm for all that comes later, the

[24] Rahner, *Schriftinspiration*, pp. 22 f.
[25] Rahner, *Schriftinspiration*, p. 50.

> framework upon which the whole of the later legal structure of the Church was built.[26]

Scripture is also one of these constitutive elements which defined the early church and therefore it also has a normative meaning for the whole history of the church. Scripture is necessary because it is the means to ensure that the future remains true to the original foundation of the church. The early church is not just the first generation; it is the continuing foundation of tradition and it cannot be replaced by later phases. God willed the Scriptures so that the early church could have this role and retain it forever.

Rahner formulated his theory about inspiration out of these thoughts. God wills the existence of the church and creates Scripture as a permanent witness to the early church: 'The inspiration of Scripture is simply no more than the way that God Himself actually founds the Church, in so far as the Scripture itself serves as a constitutive element of the early Church.'[27] This does not in any way impinge upon the human freedom and the personally and culturally contingent nature of the sacred writer. He is very much the author as he writes down in accordance with God's will what he believes and sees in the church that was created by God. The human author writes what God's will decrees must be written because it is of such immense and unsurpassable importance for the church through all of her history.

Even when a book turns out to be written by a different author than was traditionally supposed, as for example in the case of the pastoral letters which were not written by Paul, it still remains canonical and serves as evidence of God's will in His founding of the church. Following Rahner's argument, the Old Testament is inspired because from the Christian perspective it does not stand alone, but is to be understood as a prehistory of the church. The whole discussion about the inerrancy of Scripture becomes pointless in the light of this understanding of inspiration.

Scripture and tradition

The close connection between tradition and the magisterium, which became particularly obvious around the time of the First Vatican Council, explains why there was a tendency in the Catholic Church for tradition to extend its reach as widely as possible. Most of the debate revolved around a defence of the unwritten traditions that were handed down through the ages. This

[26] Rahner, *Schriftinspiration*, pp. 50–3.
[27] Rahner, *Schriftinspiration*, p. 58.

extended even to a dogma of mutual exclusivity: whatever is contained in Scripture is not in the tradition, and whatever is contained in the tradition is not in Scripture. The basis for this dogma is to be found in the Council of Trent's formulation which states that revelation is contained 'in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus'.[28]

Protestant theology understands the term tradition in terms of a purely human invention. Scripture alone is the source of revelation, and this makes it the sole authority in the church. Scripture is the original, unadulterated and clearly comprehensible authority, while tradition is seen as something later which has been marred by human invention. From the Protestant perspective, a reliance on tradition means necessarily a suppression of the Scriptures. This scepticism about tradition grew stronger in the Protestant areas between 1854 and 1950 because of the Marian doctrines that prevailed in the Catholic Church during that time. Protestant theologians saw the dogma of *sola scriptura* as a bastion against teachings which had taken root within Catholicism and which they regarded as unbiblical.

In the years immediately before the Second Vatican Council both churches began to reconsider this issue of the relationship between Scripture and tradition. Joseph Rupert Geiselmann, a German theologian from Tübingen who was researching the Council of Trent, discovered that a draft version of the Decree on the Holy Scripture had stated that the truth of the gospel was contained partly in the books which had been written down, and partly in the traditions which had not been written down '*partim . . . partim*'. This version was replaced by a simple 'and' so that the final text stated that the divine truth is contained 'in the written books, and the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down even unto us, transmitted as it were hand to hand'.[29] The Council did not want to commit itself to the *partim . . . partim* school of thought, and so it left open the question of the relationship between Scripture and tradition. The word *et* in the final version permits an interpretation along the lines of *partim . . . partim* but it does not require such an interpretation. An interpretation which recognises both Scripture and tradition as having a role in passing on the full content of the Christian message is therefore in accordance with the Council of Trent's decree. In true conciliar fashion, the Council of Trent allowed a question which was not yet ready to be decided to remain open in anticipation of future discussion. In the

[28] DH 1501.
[29] DH 1501.

centuries which followed, this word *et* did nonetheless tend to be interpreted in the sense of *partim . . . partim*. This concept lay at the heart of the theological debate that developed between the Roman Catholic 'Scripture and tradition' position and the Protestant 'by Scripture alone' position.

This research into the Council of Trent soon came up against some exegetical considerations. New Testament scholarship had shown that Scripture itself was the product of a gradual laying down of traditions. Before the New Testament Scripture existed there had been things handed down through preaching and proclamations, and in confessions, stories and reports. Tradition therefore turns out to be a process which starts before Scripture was in existence, and so it is not a channel which runs parallel to Scripture and from which one can draw sustenance whenever the Scripture fails to provide sufficient evidence to decide a particular issue. Scripture stands within tradition, and it has in turn been a source from which tradition has emerged.

These insights have been reflected in the discipline of systematic theology. Tradition is not a way to bypass Scripture but, as the Tübingen School in the middle of the nineteenth century had already explained, it is part and parcel of the revelation that is the life of the church in its entirety. The formation of the canon is done by tradition and not by Scripture itself. That is to say: the process in which Scripture becomes Scripture takes place within tradition and by means of tradition. It became clear that it is not acceptable to look to supposed tradition whenever Scripture does not provide sufficient evidence to prove a certain point. If this were the case, then tradition would have to be traceable back through history to the apostolic beginning, and this is precisely not the case anywhere in the history of the church. Tradition was not able to fill the gaps that are to be found in Scripture.

This new appreciation of tradition as something that existed before Scripture and that arises out of Scripture prompted both Catholic and Protestant theologians to revise their opinions about the role of tradition. Adolf von Harnack maintained in 1907 that the whole debate loses not only its intensity but also much of its meaning when Scripture itself is understood as a tradition, and when no single tradition is ever left unexamined.[30] At its meeting in Montreal in 1963 the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches prepared some papers on tradition and what it means. In the process they determined that Scripture never stood alone, but always existed within a tradition. These developments meant that the final hurdles had been overcome,

[30] Adolf von Harnack, *Protestantismus und Katholizismus in Deutschland* (Berlin: Georg Stilke, 1907), pp. 18 f.

and the way was now clear for the new openings that emerged in the Second Vatican Council.

The Second Vatican Council

Reflection on Scripture as the word of God shaped the whole of the Council's activity. This was even symbolised by the fact that at every plenary meeting a precious Bible manuscript took a ceremonial place of honour in the council meeting room. The Council had committed itself to a reform process that would put Scripture back into the centre of the church's life and mission.

It had been part of the plan, from the very earliest preparatory phases onwards, for the Council to write a dogmatic constitution on the Scriptures as a bearer of divine revelation. A first draft of a decree on revelation was drawn up in the theological commission. The president of this Commission was the conservative Cardinal Ottaviani and the leading theologian was Sebastian Tromp, a Jesuit scholar from the Netherlands. The text bore the title 'Constitutio de fontibus revelationis' (The sources of the revelation). This made it clear from the start that the document would be tied firmly to the strictest form of traditional scholastic theology. All of the outstanding issues in biblical studies were approached from a position of defensiveness and hostility. It was thought that the role of tradition in relation to Scripture would be extended, and that the concepts of inspiration and infallibility in all religious and profane matters should be understood literally. The question of the historicity of the Gospels was not thought to be in any way problematic. The goal of the Commission in this document was to reject modern exegesis lock, stock and barrel. If this draft had been adopted then, according to Joseph Ratzinger,[31] the consequences would probably have been even more serious than the difficulties which finally did arise as a result of the one-sidedness of the earlier anti-modernist condemnations.

Pope John XXIII intervened in this highly charged situation and had the draft withdrawn. This action was a turning point in the history of the Council, and perhaps even in the history of the church in the twentieth century. Protestant commentators on the Council remarked that this moment signified the end of the epoch of counter-reformation in the theology of the Roman Catholic Church.[32]

[31] Joseph Ratzinger, 'Einleitung zu Dei Verbum', in Heinrich Suso Brechter et al. (eds.), *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder Verlag, 1957–68), second supplementary vol., pp. 498–503 at p. 500.

[32] Georg G. Blum, *Offenbarung und Überlieferung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), p. 23.

The tensions within the dogmatic constitution carried on all the way through its deliberations, and controversies accompanied the Council at every turn. Nevertheless, the final document which emerged and was finally approved was regarded by many observers and commentators as the most important document of all those that the Council produced. Despite all the tensions and difficulties that had been there from the start, the document manages to find a way out of the narrowness of neo-scholastic theology of revelation. The text begins: 'Hearing the word of God with reverence and proclaiming it with faith . . .'.[33] The Word of God, or *Dei Verbum*, stands firmly at the centre of the church and of all that she undertakes. The church is perceived as both hearing and proclaiming, which means in other words she is in service to the word of God. It is only when she carries out this service, when she hears and proclaims, that she is truly the church, and it is only then that everything revealed in *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudiam et Spes* applies to her, and only then that she becomes the mystery and the people of God.

The Scripture is declared to be the centre of theology: 'The students are to be formed with particular care in the study of the Bible, which ought to be, as it were, the soul of all theology.'[34] The proclamation of the word of God is the first duty of bishops and priests.[35] Scripture stands as a higher authority above the magisterium and tradition: 'This teaching office is not above the word, but serves it.'[36] The historical-critical method of exegesis is recognised and even declared necessary for academic study of the Bible:

> However, since God speaks in Sacred Scripture through men in human fashion, the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words. To search out the intention of the sacred writers, attention should be given, among other things, to 'literary forms'. For truth is set forth and expressed differently in texts which are variously historical, prophetic, poetic or of other forms of discourse. The interpreter must investigate what meaning the sacred writer intended to express and actually expressed in particular circumstances by using contemporary literary forms in accordance with the situation of his own time and culture. For the correct understanding

[33] *Dei Verbum* (henceforth DV); available at vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.
[34] *Optatam Totius* (OT) 16, available at www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_optatam-totius_en.html.
[35] *Lumen Gentium* (LG) 25, available at www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.
[36] DV 10.

> of what the sacred author wanted to assert, due attention must be paid to the customary and characteristic styles of feeling, speaking and narrating which prevailed at the time of the sacred writer, and to the patterns men normally employed at that period in their everyday dealings with one another.[37]

These words finally brought an end to a period of bitter division between the church magisterium and academic theologians.

The Council perceived Scripture and tradition as one and the same thing, and it left the exact relationship between the two as an open question for theologians to discuss:

> Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.[38]

This integration of Scripture and tradition is very much to be welcomed, but it still leaves one question open: does it leave room for Scripture to be a critical standard by which tradition is measured, or for Scripture to be used as a means of criticising or even occasionally rejecting developments that take place in the church? Joseph Ratzinger stated immediately after the end of the Council[39] that he regretted that there was no explicit mention of the possibility that there could be traditions which deformed the church and there was in practice no positioning of Scripture as an element within the church which could be used to criticise tradition. It was precisely within the remit of a council which had set itself up as a reforming council, and thereby implicitly recognised the possibility and reality of harmful tradition, to work out some of the theological foundations for its own existence and intentions.

[37] DV 12.
[38] DV 9.
[39] Joseph Ratzinger, 'Kommentar zu Dei Verbum, Proemium, I. und II. Kapitel', in Brechter et al. (eds.), *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (Freiburg/Brsg: Herder Verlag, 1957–68), second supplementary vol., pp. 504–28 at pp. 524 f.

There was also some controversy at the Council over the question of the infallibility of Scripture. The draft had retained the idea of complete infallibility in respect of religious and profane matters, and there was an opposing position which held that the element of inspiration applied only to those matters which dealt with the relationship between God and human beings, and that all other aspects were to be regarded purely as historical sources. The final text of the Council reads: 'Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation.' The holy Scriptures 'have God as their author' but 'In composing the sacred books, God chose men and while employed by Him they made use of their powers and abilities, so that with Him acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which he wanted'.[40]

After the Second Vatican Council

The period immediately after the Second Vatican Council was filled with many problems and controversies in Catholic theology. It was in the end a considerable challenge to deal quickly enough with the backlog of issues for reform which had been building up, particularly in relation to the way the church made use of Scripture. In the field of academic exegesis there was a measure of success because today it is no longer forced to submit to the extreme limitations that had been imposed upon it during the modernism crisis and its aftermath. The historical-critical method of exegesis has become standard practice. It is generally agreed that the long gap which had been imposed upon Catholic scholarship has now been almost completely bridged. Exegetes such as Rudolf Schnackenburg, Anton Vögtle, Heinz Schürmann, Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Jacques Dupont have helped to restore the fine reputation of academic biblical scholarship in the Catholic Church. Nowadays there are hardly any denominational differences to be seen in scholarly work on the Scriptures, and discussions have made it possible for the gaps between Catholic and Protestant thinking to be at least partly bridged. The German-language *Evangelisch–Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*[41] is a very fine outcome of this new development. Exegetical and

[40] DV 11.

[41] *Evangelisch–Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* (Zurich: Benzinger, 1975).

source studies are now valued and used across the denominations as a matter of course.

The prevailing opinion now is that differences in the way that Scripture is understood are no longer important enough to warrant a division into separate churches. Nevertheless, this agreement on the understanding of Scripture has not brought about very much of a rapprochement between the people or the leaders of the Christian churches. Most ecumenical documentation does not have Scripture in a central position, and agreement about the understanding of Scripture has little impact on attempts to bring the churches together. This can be seen in the single most important breakthrough in the ecumenical world, the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification which was agreed by the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation and subsequently adopted also by other church associations. The kind of biblical reflection found in this document is, according to a widely circulated critical appraisal, singularly vague, and it does not contribute very much to the argument.[42] Ecumenical documents these days usually adopt a methodology of differentiated consensus. This means that a basic consensus view is formulated that can withstand differences in the way things work out in practice. The aim of ecumenical activity is thus to verify everything and check that the variations occurring across the denominations are all compatible. Most of the activity centres on checking dogmatic assertions, whereas the reception of the Bible plays a role mainly in the formulation of a basic consensus. This means that exegetical research plays a more important role in these documents than might appear at first sight.

The difficulty of bringing exegetical insights into the practice of the church is not confined to the ecumenical domain. There seems to be a general view that in the hermeneutical circle of Scripture and church the Bible is hardly ever used as a critical norm against which the life of the church must be measured, or against which dogmatic assertions can be checked. On the contrary, exegetical insights remain largely on the periphery. They are acknowledged and single passages are cited, but they are hardly ever brought to bear when they call into question some traditional doctrine or practice of the church. The assertion of the Council that dogma stands below the authority of Scripture and

[42] This is based on the question of how far the condemnations of the sixteenth century remain valid and how far they still divide the churches. More intensive reflection on the Bible could have opened up the possibility of reformulating the doctrine of justification together. On this point see the German Ecumenical Studies Committee's publication (DÖSTA) entitled *Von Gott angenommen – in Christus verwandelt* (Frankfurt am Main: Lembeck, 2006).

serves Scripture has not been properly carried through in the decision making of the Catholic Church, or in the other Christian churches either.

A new appreciation of the Scriptures came about in the Catholic Church through the reform of the liturgy which followed the Council, and this could be seen in the symbolic rites as well as in its actual proclamation. Scripture reading has its fixed place in the liturgy. In church services the biblical readings are given in the vernacular. An additional reading was included, and the pericope order was expanded into a three-year cycle so that nowadays there are a great many more readings in church services than there used to be before the Council. There is also a fixed place for the sermon in church services, and it is generally based on a biblical text. These changes show that the Second Vatican Council's directive regarding Scripture as the centre of theology has borne fruit. This can also be said of the way that the magisterium is regarded. Before the Council, bishops and priests in the Catholic Church were regarded mainly as ministers of the sacraments; but the Council determined that their primary task was the proclamation of the word of God. This realignment has deeply affected the way that numerous church officials perceive their roles.

The Catholic Church continues its intensive efforts to promote biblical knowledge outside the liturgy as well as within it. In many countries biblical publications have emerged, and these are targeted at a wide range of different audiences as they aim to spread knowledge about the Bible and how it should be understood. These publications are often produced in ecumenical cooperation, and they have resulted in ecumenical collections of Scripture texts, with new collaborative translations, which are suitable also for use in the liturgy. Besides general literature on the Bible and academic studies, there are also devotional publications based on the Bible which are intended for the spiritual edification of readers. There are countless Bible-study groups in which people read the Scriptures, interpret them, meditate on them and draw inspiration for a life lived according to the teachings of the Bible. These were and often are a starting point for ecumenical collaboration, or sometimes also for social engagement. Experience has shown that reading the Scriptures can bring Christians together in spite of denominational boundaries.

Even though the historical-critical method is now used as a matter of course in academic exegesis, and even though there are hardly any serious scholars who reject its use on principle, there are still some who are critical of the way that this method has displaced all other approaches. This is true even outside fundamentalist circles. There are scholars who maintain that interpreting the Scripture historically does not facilitate a devout way of dealing with the word of God because this method is forever bound up with its origins in the critical

attitudes of the Enlightenment. It does not allow the biblical past to come alive and it does not let the Scripture speak in response to the situation today. Even though hardly anyone today would ever think of calling upon tradition as an independent source when Scripture does not provide a suitable answer to a particular question, the fundamental problem which was buried beneath the earlier controversy about Scripture and tradition is still very much alive. This problem is the fact that according to Catholic doctrine Scripture is the book of the church, and it must be read and understood within the confines of the church.

What this means is that the church has an obligation to orient itself again and again to the Scripture. It must align itself with the whole of Scripture and not just with a few verses which are trotted out as proof (*dicta probantia*) on occasions when the dogmatic teachings and the status quo of the church's institutional structures need to be legitimised. Scripture and church are in a relationship of interdependence. Joseph Ratzinger requires this of theological exegesis:

> The first presupposition of all exegesis is that it accepts the Bible as a book. In so doing, it has already chosen a place for itself which does not simply follow from the study of literature. It has identified this particular literature as the product of a coherent history, and this history as the proper space for coming to understanding. If it wishes to be theology, it must take a further step. It must recognize that the faith of the Church is that form of '*sympathia*' without which the Bible remains a closed book.[43]

The unity of Scripture is guaranteed through its inclusion within the faith of the church. The identity of the church throughout history becomes a hermeneutical key, which overcomes the time difference.

The result of this is that in contemporary church documents it is emphasised that exegesis must take place within the framework of the faith, and it must take this as its methodological starting point. A decree from the papal Bible Commission of 1993 on 'The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church' mentions the historical-critical method and lists alongside it other approaches to the Bible which are described as 'synchronic', and which therefore claim to overcome the time difference and make Scripture directly accessible to the present time. The German bishops' conference issued a publication on the interpretation of Scripture in 1993 in which it stated that 'the Bible is not simply a collection of texts which have no relationship with each other, but rather

[43] Joseph Ratzinger, Lecture delivered on 27 January 1988 at St Peter's Church in New York.

it is a set of connected elements which bear witness to a single very large tradition'.[44] This publication stresses the 'canonical approach', as described in the works of Brevard Childs and James A. Sanders, which concentrates on the canonical final form of the text and takes this as the basis for research, since the church has declared this the authoritative version and has passed this version down through the ages. Because these texts have been adopted into the canon and handed down through the church, they have acquired a different or additional meaning, beyond that which was given to them by the biblical authors. They are understood as founding documents of the Christian faith, and this means that they possess a quality that their original writers had not envisaged. It follows then, that for Scripture to be understood, more is required than simply interpreting its origin and sources. The text has to be made available in such a way that it can speak directly to the contemporary listener and reader. The fact that Scripture has been understood and passed down by the Church in a state of wholeness means that we still have the right to see it as this complete entity and, despite all the discrepancies that are thrown up by the historical-critical method, that we still should interpret it in ways that go beyond the original literary documents.

At the present time there are various methods of synchronic interpretation of Scripture besides the canonical method, and these are very often not based on any clearly defined theoretical concept. They tend to emerge out of the way that particular groups go about the practical task of interpreting the Scriptures and they cannot easily be differentiated from each other. These methods are to be found within the Catholic Church but they are by no means confined to this context: they exist, with all kinds of different emphasis, in all Christian groups and alignments.

The purpose of existential interpretation is to grasp the meaning of Scripture in a way that has an impact on the reader in his or her present-day existence. It is based on the assumption that the biblical text addresses the same key questions about human existence that affect people at the present time. Eugen Drewerman maintains that purely historical exegesis is responsible for the intellectualisation of Christianity and for a decline in the church's relevance in the modern world. Synchronicity of understanding is made possible when a person can be shown that spiritual states described in Scripture still affect people today and still cause distress, and that Scripture provides paths towards healing. When this happens it is not about strange things and distant

[44] German Bishops' Conference, *Verlautbarungen des Apostolischen Stuhls* No. 15 (Bonn: Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 1993), p. 44.

times, but it is all about the direct experience of the listener and the reader. According to Drewerman the biblical images should be interpreted as myths which transcend time and which contain the ancient dreams of mankind. This approach allows the texts to speak directly to the people, and release them from their fear.

H. K. Berg notes that

> linguistic interpretation draws upon the methods of literary theory and applies them to the interpretation of biblical texts. It does not investigate the origin or the historical location of a text but instead it looks at the text as it sits within its own separate linguistic organism, or 'text world', which is a coherent entity. It conceives of a text as a system of relationships between various linguistic elements which can be grasped and described as they appear in structures which are repeated over and over again. The reader is invited to become immersed in this text world, to make his own discoveries there, and to become aware of new ways of seeing things.[45]

Materialist interpretation seeks to clarify the social relationships within which a text was first produced, and it is guided by a special interest in freeing people from particular structures of power or from becoming victims of an overwhelming desire for material gain. Feminist theology takes as its starting point the experience that women have of being oppressed in a society that is dominated by men. It shows how biblical statements have been misused to sustain these structures and it aims to break free from them, using female figures in the Bible with whom the women of today can identify as examples of emancipation.

Liberation theology, which took place mainly in Latin America, was a significant development which arose in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. Scripture was read against a background in which people suffered oppression and exploitation, and they found examples in Scripture of God moving to free His people. In collective reading of the Bible that took place in study groups many people, and especially lay people, were spontaneously affected by the text and this changed their lives, and also the lives of their Christian communities. They recognised that the poverty and oppression all around them was an injustice, and not the result of some natural law, or of God's will. This realisation caused them to rise up in protest against the prevailing structures of society. Many people found that reading Scripture had enabled them to give a name to exploitative living conditions, denounce them, and find ways to begin tackling these issues. Liberation theology is most firmly rooted in

[45] Translated from Horst K. Berg, quoted in Dohmen, 'Vom vielfachen Schriftsinn', p. 43.

Bible-study groups and especially in Latin America. Early signs of it can also be found in the texts of the Second Vatican Council, which fed into liberation theology mainly through the Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM) in Medellin in 1968.

An experience of being directly affected by biblical texts is also a key element for charismatic groups. These groups experience the Holy Spirit when they listen to Scripture and this connects them with the early church community and their experiences at Pentecost. These groups believe that the experience of the Holy Spirit transcends time and culture so that they become just like the apostles, who were the first witnesses of the resurrected Christ. It must not be forgotten, however, that unconsidered conclusions can be reached during this process, which defy historical factors, and so it follows that this approach can fall into fundamentalist immediacy.

Despite some bias which creeps into each of these new methods here and there, it is important to note that so long as they do not turn into a universal method of interpretation, which would be clearly inadmissible, they enrich human understanding of Scripture and often reveal novel aspects which open up new avenues into Scripture for those who are seeking the truth. This applies also to those exegetical developments which have been criticised over the years by the magisterium because of their actual or supposed reduction of the biblical message. It is important to remember that these efforts to transcend the time difference and allow Scripture to speak to the present time do not involve any questioning of the historical-critical method, upon which, in principle at least, they rely. Modern theology cannot do without historical thinking. To abandon it would be an abdication of reasonable responsibility. The whole point of new approaches in contemporary exegesis is not that historical criticism should be called into question, but that it should continue and, where appropriate, be supplemented with new methods.

27

The Bible in Protestantism from 1750 to 2000

MARK W. ELLIOTT

It may be hard to think of 'the modern world' without Protestantism, and conversely modernity is very much bound up with the Protestant phenomenon. Yet if Protestantism defined itself by 'Scripture alone', the modern age could paradoxically be characterised by the Bible's eclipse, with the de facto authoritative canon shrinking to disappearing point. At the start of this period the Bible on the one hand inspired a mission to restore the world to its pristine integrity through trade and science as well as through gospel and ethics, and yet on the other it seemed to encourage an increasingly world-denying withdrawal from the world of politics and even institutional religion. Either way, the Bible was read as a narrative with one literal sense, which mediated the divine action of a time gone by. Whereas the emergent experimental natural sciences brought the future into the present, the human–divine science of Protestant theology brought ancient wisdom to bear on matters of culture and politics, so as to demand analogous obedient action from God's present-day covenantal partners.[1] However, the shift towards regarding both Testaments as books about the past was by 1750 so great that biblical prophecies were no longer to be seen as demanding fulfilment in the events of the present day: such an attitude had been the cause of the religious and civil wars of the previous two centuries.[2] Rather, the Old Testament's ethical histories of divine–human agency as spiritualised through the New Testament thrust ordinary humans into seeing themselves as responsible for the world and its improvement. The Bible became fuel for private piety. As for being a witness to the word of God shaping world history, it was only through the public outworking of those private visions that the Bible would have any impact on the wider world.

[1] See Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 203 f.

[2] Anton Seifert, *Der Rückzug der biblischen Prophetie von der neueren Geschichte* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1990).

Pietism and the Bible: experience calling to experience

By 1750 Pietist Protestant movements across western Europe made use of the Bible to encourage positive experience of divine grace. 'Experience', 'experiment' and 'empiricism' all occupy similar semantic territory, yet such experiences were deemed extra- or supra-natural. Nevertheless, core Pietism's Biblicism avoided the esoteric and the harsh extremes of the previous century's confessions. Nicholas Hope puts it thus: 'Pietist reform (1720–70) was therefore not so much disciplinary, though authorities obviously liked its policing aspect, as an attempt in a neighbourly down-to-earth way to make the Bible (summarized in catechisms) accessible and understood in parishes.'[3] In Halle, Berlin and Copenhagen ordinands were taught from the Old Testament historical books and the whole New Testament, while pulpits were placed in the middle of all Berlin churches.[4] Confessional polemic made way for meditation on God's mighty acts of renewal (which were seen to have carried on into church history). It would seem that New Testament spirituality was superimposed upon the earthily realistic Old Testament. The Old Testament, by contrast, was seen as a source book of natural wisdom learned from providential ordaining. Thus in Cruden's *Concordance* (1st edn., 1737) one learned: 'Quails are innumerable and that sometimes they fly so thick over the sea, that being weary they fall into ships, sometimes in such numbers that they sink them with their weight.'[5]

The Christian court of Denmark came under Pietist sway around the time of the accession of Christian VI in 1731 with help from the English Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK, which contributed its own particular eschatological overtones, not least regarding Jewish conversion). Resistance came from the Lutheran Orthodox, who asserted that each person had enough natural knowledge of God to be able to decide for or against him. The official Pietistic movement as a middle way between Lutherans and Reformed was further shaped by biblical themes of the millennium but not always by Scripture reading. The need for lay people to read and interpret the Bible was contested, and this discouraged too much study, and in some cases allowed a growing conviction that it was 'inner light' and not what was read

[3] N. Hope, *German and Scandinavian Protestantism, 1700–1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 153.
[4] Hope, *German and Scandinavian Protestantism*, p. 180.
[5] Julia Keay, *Alexander the Corrector* (London: HarperCollins, 2004), p. 50.

that made the difference.[6] The upshot was that Swedish radical Bible Pietists with their appeal to the uneducated were expelled from Denmark in the 1730s, only to return to Christiansfeld in 1772 after having provided the hitherto illiterate peasantry of Estonia and Latvia with vernacular bibles, through which they learned to read.[7]

In the German-speaking lands the Pietist Cansteinische Bibelanstalt[8] was committed to distributing bibles to those who could not afford them as part of their work of succouring the poor and raising educational standards. This Bible was of course the Luther translation. This did not mean that the Bible was to be read without guidance as to its central message. The eighteenth-century German Bible was one containing an introduction that would help believers to learn the essential core of the Bible's teaching. The best way to beat insidious Enlightenment scepticism was for ordinands to learn the Bible better, as in the case of J. L. Mosheim's reforms at Göttingen, where biblical moral theology would show a middle way between rationalism and 'enthusiasm'.[9] If one can speak of a biblical hermeneutic then it was a 'Cocceian' one of reading the Bible as depicting a history of salvation with a 'pre-millennial' eschatological thrust. This encouraged a new sense of passivity, as with J. A. Bengel, writing in his *Ordo Temporum* (1741) about a return of Christ in 1836. However, quite early in the eighteenth century the practice of setting dates based on biblical prophecies was frowned upon in mainstream Pietism, not least by John Wesley.

Close reading of a book whose divinity resided in its power

Meanwhile, in the circles of the pious the aim was to have the Bible being read at six years of age![10] This helped to maintain a 'covenanting' principle whereby the Bible was a means of education, the connecting band of fellowship and mark of identity – distinguishing their eighteenth-century followers from indifference and Quakerism. George Whitefield commented on preaching in Scotland in 1741 that 'the rustling made by opening the bibles all

[6] Martin Schwartz Lausten, *A Church History of Denmark* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 172.
[7] Hope, *German and Scandinavian Protestantism*, p. 253.
[8] M. Brecht, 'Das Aufkommen der neuen Frömmigkeitsbewegung in Deutschland', in M. Brecht (ed.), *Geschichte des Pietismus*, vol. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), pp. 113–203.
[9] Hope, *German and Scandinavian Protestantism*, pp. 268 ff.
[10] Arthur Fawcett, *The Cambuslang Revival* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1971), p. 76.

at once, quite surprised me'.[11] In these times of Revival, comfort was taken by a woman found guilty of sexual immorality from the words of Isaiah 54:5.[12] This powerful marital imagery from the Bible also featured at communion services, such as in the sermon of Alexander Bilsland at Cambuslang in August 1743 and yet again in the sermon of William Carey at Nottingham in May 1792. A glance at the correspondence of Jonathan Edwards reveals a transatlantic fellowship in the Bible, its theology and imagery.

In 1727 Graf von Zinzendorf brought out his Ebersdorfer Bible for his Moravian brethren, which, perhaps even more significantly, was then produced in small passages for each day of the year in the so-called Losungen from 1731 onwards, with a verse from a hymn and a prayer following the Scripture readings. For the likes of Bengel (d. 1754) it seemed that this book had indeed been verbally inspired but that it was part of the ongoing Reformation's task to free it from textual corruptions. Textual criticism was therefore not criticism of the Bible as such, but only of the tradition that had attached itself to it. Such an influence worked on John Wesley: 'If there be one falsehood in that book it did not come from the God of truth.'[13] His overall insistence was that the Bible is first and foremost a means of grace, written to repair the damage done to our grasp of revelation since the Fall. If one's experience could miraculously match that of the New Testament church then a literal interpretation of the Scriptures could be achieved: 'here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*.'[14] The Bible was the means by which Sunday preaching would shape morals (with more than 50 per cent of Wesley's sermons being 'moral' rather than doctrinal in character), and the 'question and answers' sessions a self-regulating means of a discipline with biblical content. It is no coincidence that the terms 'Christian Perfection' and 'Scriptural Holiness' are synonymous. Yet, as with Bengel, there was no appreciation of the inner life histories in the New Testament.[15] The only human part of Scripture was its grammar, and all the rest was timeless and divine. He spoke of his method of preparing sermons: 'I open, I read his book … consider parallel passages of Scripture' (*Preface to the Sermons*). Further, at Sermon 107,4,2 he claims that a doctrine

[11] L. Tyerman, *Life of George Whitefield* (London: Hodder, 1995, repr. [1876–7]), pp. 1, 508.
[12] Fawcett, *Cambuslang Revival*, p. 83.
[13] John Wesley, Journal, VI, 117, cited in W. J. Abraham, *The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 116.
[14] E. H. Sugden (ed.), *Wesley's Standard Sermons* (London: Epworth Press, 1968), pp. 31 f. Also D. Bullen, *A Man of One Book? John Wesley's Interpretation and Use of the Bible* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007).
[15] H. G. Reventlow, 'Protestant Understanding of the Bible', in B. Uffenheimer and H. G. Reventlow (eds.), *Creative Biblical Exegesis* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), pp. 213–15.

must be founded in Scripture, and that any experience is confirmatory of it, not vice versa, and at Sermon 77,2,6: 'neither "representative", nor "federal head", are scriptural terms, it is not worthwhile to contend for them'.[16]

John's brother Charles was aware of the text of Psalm 107 'so nobly describing what God had done for my soul'.[17] Any conscious awareness of sanctification would give way to a desire to avoid self-absorption through any outgoing holiness of relationships and social justice.[18] Bible Christians and Primitive Methodists emerged in the early years of the 1800s with the intention of keeping Methodism as a movement whose proclamation of the Bible was aimed outward. Bible societies viewed the Bible as a divine book and thus an evangelistic tool. 'Methodists in general accepted Richard Watson (*fl.* 1830s)'s dictum that Holy Scripture is unique in its power to communicate divine truths on all subjects connected with our moral state.'[19]

The paedagogical Bible

Not all German Protestants towards the end of the eighteenth century felt that without Luther and the Luther Bible insisting on precise renderings, the whole German *Geist* or culture would have been impoverished. Certainly it was the single most effective means of unifying dialects by providing regions from the Rhine to beyond the Oder with a common High German core. Yet as well as the complaint of overfamiliarity with its tropes (Novalis), its standardising of German meant that the quality of regional German had suffered.[20] Still, J. G. Hamann felt a sacramental presence of the Word through yet beyond the words of any Bible translation.[21] For all his insistence on history and hermeneutical self-consciousness, J. S. Semler would tie Psalms and Pauline readings together to provide an almost medieval meditation, without the allegory. Semler's was a Bible piety.[22] To that end Old Testament

[16] R. Davies, 'The People Called Methodists 1: Our Doctrines', in R. Davies and G. Rupp (eds.), *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, 4 vols. (London: Epworth, 1965), vol. 1, pp. 145–80 at p. 148.

[17] *Journal*, 22 May 1738.

[18] As in R. N. Flew, *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934). Cf. W. Strawson, 'Methodist Theology 1850–1950', in R. Davies and G. Rupp (eds.), *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, 4 vols. (London: Epworth, 1983), vol. III, pp. 182–231.

[19] A. Outler, *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Collected Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), p. 153.

[20] Jacob Grimm in the *Vorrede* to his *Deutsche Grammatik* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1837 [1819]).

[21] H. Bornkamm, *Luther im Spiegel der deutschen Geistesgeschichte*, 2nd edn. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), p. 22.

[22] Gottfried Hörnig, *Johann Salomo Semler* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996).

prophecies were more to show what spiritual faith looked like than texts to found Christology.[23] Thus for one of the fathers of critical method, biblical scholarship was there to serve the congregation's piety.

Similarly, Edward Harwood's *A Liberal Translation of the New Testament*[24] was all about 'making its truths digestible to the sensitive stomachs of the modern age.... Once the bible was made pedagogical – suited to moral teachings – it became a very tasty comestible.'[25] But the equivalents in Germany, of J. L. Schmidt (whose Bible would stop to clarify the meanings of 'door', 'mother', 'stick' and 'bread') and K. F. Bahrdt offended Frederick the Great for 'watering down' Christianity: in 1779 the former was threatened with banishment and the second edition of his Bible confiscated. No less a figure than Semler criticised Bahrdt for portraying Jesus as teacher of secrets to a secret society, and for inflicting anti-trinitarian views on the public.[26]

If Scripture was to give moral messages, this was 'one reason that biblical paraphrases became more popular during the middle of the eighteenth century, a popular response to the streamlining of Scripture'.[27] *Bildung* (a moral education to fit the soul) was replacing *Erziehung* and soon the Bible would be cast aside as the lodestar for education. Locke had already said that reading the Bible as a jumble led to jumbled thinking; rational religion should be taught first.[28] A common complaint of late eighteenth-century congregations in more than one part of Europe was that they could not understand their preachers.

The English Authorised Version became seen as literary and awe inspiring, not least because its human Hebrew *Vorlage* was literary. For Samuel Johnson biblical notions were old and familiar, whereas literature dealt with the new and could be religious, so that Bible translations could never be very good literature. James Boswell in 1763 saw stories such as the Joseph one as ways of drawing men of taste into appreciation of the Bible.[29] What was inspired were the Hebrew originals; it could be that the mid–eighteenth-century doubts about the New Testament text in the wake of John Mill's publishing of all the variant readings encouraged a turn to the Old Testament, whose text it was believed was relatively fixed and which was also more poetic. It would seem

[23] Hörnig, *Johann Salomo Semler*, pp. 260–4.
[24] Edward Harwood, *A Liberal Translation of the New Testament* (London: T. Becket & P. A. de Hendt, 1768).
[25] Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, p. 119.
[26] Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, p. 119.
[27] Katz, *God's Last Words*, p. 151.
[28] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (London: n.p., 1690).
[29] Norton, *The Bible as Literature*, vol. II, p. 58.

that Benjamin Kennicott's attempt in the 1760s to free the Hebrew Bible from later Masoretic corruptions was a vain undertaking, since popular opinion was that one could not know much more than the Masoretes, or King James translators for that matter. So it was better to stay with established 'divine' translations of divine mysteries. 'Silver and gold have I none' was a providential improvement on the Greek, almost as if the king's translators were like those of the Septuagint. Robert Lowth stretched the genre of 'poetry' to include the Prophets. 'Lowth, in his version of Isaiah, introduced free verse into English … broke the mould of English verse and anticipated the verse of Whitman and Lawrence.'[30] Lowth did not want to replace the Authorised Version for the people, and yet his insights into the Hebrew were not so much for an elite to understand, but to spell out a 'Hebrew' mystery behind the English text, almost that the spirit of the text was quite 'other'. To question the fixed metrical 'taming' of the Psalms as practised in the English Bible and its metrical versions was quite a bold move. There was form, not chaos, in the Hebrew, but only so much as to channel the passion for the numinous. 'The sublime' involved a welling up of feeling as the reader was touched by the language which is not unrelated to the force of the content: more sublime than any other literature. One can speak of a 'positive idea of confusion as an aspect of poetic sublimity'.[31] One should try to read the Hebrew as Hebrews read it.

Thus as Romanticism caught the imagination of preachers and writers there grew the sense that one needed to engage with the original languages, not for the purposes of theological or even historical accuracy, but in order to be grasped by the inspiring power of the biblical imagination. Goethe felt that reading the Bible as a great work of literature was playful, even abandoned, and that the Bible critics were missing the point of the poetry. His own creative writing was founded on the creative writing in the Bible.[32] The Bible was the matrix for artists which should not be forgotten. Herder saw Jesus' movement as developing a universal brotherhood out of Jewish national religion.[33] Christianity had forgotten this and fallen back into rules and slavery, and Herder preferred biblical enthusiasm even if it was misguided, for God

[30] Norton, *The Bible as Literature*, vol. II, p. 72.
[31] Norton, *The Bible as Literature*, vol. II, p. 66.
[32] U. Landfester, 'Buch der Bücher, Text der Texturen: Goethes bibelphilologischer Kulturbegriff', in J. Anderegg and E. A. Kunz (eds.), *Goethe und die Bibel* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), pp. 217–240 at pp. 217 f., 221. Also T. Tillmann, *Hermeneutik und Bibelexegese beim jungen Goethe* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2006).
[33] J. G. Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, in *Werke*, vol. VI (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989), pp. 713 f.

breathed invisibly through it to produce humanity for the human race. The Bible for Herder was like a cathedral of images. The Old Testament contained lessons that needed re-learning.[34] Herder tells his readers to make it a habit to read a chapter a day, so long as that does not become unthinking.[35] 'Read a whole book at one go! Read until you find a sentence that speaks to a situation and let it lead you!' He established certain rules for profitable reading: 'Don't come to have [the] Bible justify you; don't treat the best book in the world worse than any book! And if Joshua believed the sun stood still in the sky, what was that to us?'[36]

Of course one must not imitate the ancient style, but be inspired by it to be creative after its spirit and have our contemporary aesthetic norms challenged. It is interesting to note that, in the Göttingen of the 1820s, while the historical and wisdom books of the Old Testament were taught in the philosophy (history) department, the prophetic part was reserved for theology. Biblical hermeneutics was not about intuition but philology and the literary conventions so long as one would also learn something useful. George Hill of St Andrews in 1787 taught that searching the Scriptures was a way to get the whole counsel of God, and that Jesus tells us to look therein for testimony to him. Likewise, one learns reverence for Providence only through reading Scripture. At the same time, scientific advance in the study of the Bible can only be helpful. 'The difficulties of Scripture are continually vanishing before enlightened inquiry; the presumption and ignorance of the scorner are exposed, the knowledge of the modest is increased, and the faith of those who wait on God is established.'[37] Scripture provided a moral education.

For Schleiermacher in *The Christian Faith*, the Bible historically examined gave encouragement to Christian experience, although that of the Old Testament was religiously primitive, with certain 'great personalities' being the proto-Christological exceptions which proved the general rule. The de-Christologising of Job 19:25 by C. A. Kortum harmonised with Schleiermacher's view that the Old Testament prophecies had nothing to do with 'Jesus'. Likewise the statement of the 1818 German Church Union left not only

[34] H.-G. Reventlow, 'The Role of the Old Testament in the German Liberal Protestant Theology of the Nineteenth Century', in H.-G. Reventlow and W. Farmer (eds.), *Biblical Studies and the Shifting of Paradigms 1850–1914* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 132–48.

[35] J. G. Herder, *Über die Göttlichkeit und Gebrauch der Bibel* (1768), written just prior to his leaving Riga (in *Werke*, vol. IX / 1 (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1994), pp. 19, 39).

[36] Herder, *Über die Göttlichkeit und Gebrauch der Bibel*, p. 38.

[37] George Hill, *The Advantages of Searching the Scriptures: A Sermon Preached in the High Church of Edinburgh, on Thursday, June 7, 1787* (Edinburgh: Martin & McDowall, 1787), p. 42.

doctrinal controversies to one side, but also the Old Testament, recognising only the New Testament as the norm for faith. Just before 1800 Alexander Geddes admitted that people did not want to see God as responsible for all the things the Old Testament authors wrote. William Blake too was outraged with some passages.[38] He preferred Numbers 11:29 ('would that all my people were prophets') which inspired a sense of a kingdom of the imagination. With Blake it was about 'a stimulus to the exploration of the imaginative space which biblical texts may offer'.[39] Shelley viewed Jesus' imagination as shaped by the poetry of the Old Testament, and Wordsworth admired the Bible's power of simplicity, while famously Coleridge wrote: 'More … than I have experienced in all other books put together … the words of the bible find me at greater depths of my being.'[40] The Romantic theory of inspiration insisted that too much emphasis had been given in the teaching of Enlightenment preachers on the Bible as object, rather than as subject. The Bible was *the* means of building up a personal subjective faith (*fides qua*) rather than supplying an answer to every doctrinal or philosophical question (*fides quae*).

The social–ethical dimension

This included inspiration to action. William Wilberforce's poor estimation of the average Briton's knowledge of the Bible was linked to the opposition his anti-slavery legislation received. Had not Locke in his 'Vital Religion' complained: 'with the Bible in their houses they are ignorant of its contents'? (an observation corroborated by Dr Johnson). He (Wilberforce) had divided Christians, but had not Jesus come to bring a sword, in the spirit of Exodus 17:16: 'the Lord *will* have war with Amalek from generation to generation'?[41] The Bible's message is one of God's incessant war on evil. To reinforce his determination to reform, Wilberforce memorised Scripture and meditated on it by night, though *A Practical View* of 1797 shows his skill in 'translating' biblical commands so that they sounded like common-sense principles. He was involved in that great uniting cause for biblical Christians, the 1804 foundation of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), and he would

[38] Norton, *The Bible as Literature*, vol. II, p. 149.

[39] C. Rowland, 'English Radicals and the Exegesis of the Apocalypse', in M. Mayordomo (ed.), *Die prägende Kraft der Texte* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2005), pp. 160–77 at p. 175.

[40] In his *Confessions*, 296. See S. Prickett, *Words and the Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[41] William Wilberforce, *A Defence of Wm Wilberforce against the railing accusation of G. Wakefield* (London: John Brooks, 1830).

defend its branch in Cambridge against prejudice from the university divines there.[42]

Biblical humanitarianism can be found in worthy treatises wherein God's concern for cattle of Nineveh is made clear from his compassion for those of Nineveh in the book of Jonah.[43] James Plumptre went further. After adducing Genesis 1:27, Isaiah 11:5–6 (which shows the Edenic state) and Deuteronomy 22:10 and 25:4 (respect for beasts), he invoked the New Testament, with a curious interpretation of Luke 11:21: 'The tongue of the dog, as we well know, is peculiarly soft and the constant licking and keeping the sores clean, tends greatly to promote the healing of them.... Here might the rich man have learned a lesson of *humanity* from his own *dogs*, as they were probably his own.'[44]

As for *human* rights, Ham the slave of Genesis 10 was not depicted as a black man until 1845.[45] Ham was never until then seen as black and Kush was not a slave. Around 1830 the curse of Ham changed from being an *explanation* of servitude to a *justification* of it, but even then it was not sufficient on its own to persuade slave-owners that black people *should* be slaves,[46] in part because of the prevailing exegetical tradition from the previous century. Matthew Henry's 1710 and Adam Clarke's 1810 commentaries focused solely on the moral gravity of sexual impropriety, drunkenness and disrespect for parents in the story. What seems to have helped to justify slavery was the combination of Genesis 10 and 11 with Deuteronomy 32:8 and Acts 17:26, so that the Babel story reinforced the curse of Ham.[47] On this matter, Henry Alford (d. 1871) remained on the fence with support from the conservative German exegete Karl F. Keil: 'The curse, as matter of world-history, has more or less followed all the Hamite races ... and even now, as e.g. the negroes and other African races under the yoke of slavery.'[48] Quite different was the approach of Marcus Dods the younger, who turned quickly to consider the

[42] One spin-off of the ecumenical nature of the BFBS would mean that Nonconformists would concur in the plans for a revised version of the English Bible. The discovery of the Codex Sinaiticus by Tischendorf in 1859 was a yet stronger prompt. But even before this discovery was made public, Charles Spurgeon had called for revision of the AV in the same year: 'I love God's Word better than I love King James's pedantic wisdom and foolish kingcraft.' See Daniell, *The Bible in English*.

[43] Rev John Glen, *Portobello Sermon 13,10,1833* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1834).

[44] Jas Plumptre, *The Case of Animal Creation and the Duties of Man to Them* (London: Darton, Harvey & Darton, 1816).

[45] Werner Sollors, *Neither Black nor White yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 99.

[46] Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 7, 11.

[47] Haynes, *Noah's Curse*, p. 19.

[48] Henry Alford, *The Book of Genesis* (London: Strahan & Co., 1872), p. 42.

moral aspects of the Flood and Noah stories: 'they are the true descendants of Ham, whether their faces be black or white . . . who find pleasure in the mere contemplation of shame, in real life, on the boards of the theatre, in daily journals, or in works of fiction'.[49]

However, 'ethics' could be used against the Bible. Tom Paine in *The Age of Reason* had brought to a wide reading public of the early years of the 1800s that which philosophers and scholars had heard a generation earlier from Voltaire: 'It [the Bible] is a history of wickedness that has served to corrupt and to brutalize mankind.'[50] If Revelation was given to individuals then it could not be revelation for all. As for the stories about Samson, 'we are neither the better nor the wiser for knowing them'.[51] Old Testament prophets were little more than musicians and the book (the Old Testament which he calls 'the Bible') is a record of vices, while 'the Testament' (the New Testament) is full of inconsistencies. Paine admitted to being no biblical expert and seems to have had a soft spot for the wisdom books.[52] 'Turning the other cheek' is feigned morality, while Proverbs 25:21 about giving one's enemy bread is much more reasonable. The book of Job is praiseworthy but it does not really belong to the Bible.[53]

An immediate response came from the Methodist Michael Nash, who objected that Paine would not have got his 'justice and mercy' creed from gazing on the creation but 'subconsciously' from Micah 6:8 and he should have remembered the third injunction – to walk humbly with his God[54] and trust the Holy Spirit as the infallible interpreter, which of course was nonsense to deists such as Paine. In his response, John Thomas of London argued against Paine that it was the *preparation and inhabitation of the planet* that took place 6,000 years ago, not the making of the earth itself; the matter of men and beasts pre-existed God's forming of them. A snake talking to Eve is 'not impossible', and, *pace* Paine, Eve's sin was not in the eating of an apple as such but breaking the command.[55] It could be said that *The Age of Reason* to some degree inoculated the English-speaking world against sceptical biblical criticism.

[49] Marcus Dods, *The Book of Genesis* (New York: A. C. Armstrong:, 1892), p. 78.
[50] Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004 [1795]), p. 13.
[51] Paine, *The Age of Reason*, p. 33.
[52] X. Tilliette, *Les Philosophes lisent la Bible* (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 2001), p. 21 f.
[53] Tillette, *Philosophes*, p. 124.
[54] Michael Nash, *Paine's Age of reason measured by the standard of truth. Wakefield's examination of, and a layman's answer to, The age of reason* (London: J. Matthews & J. S. Jordan, 1794), p. 9.
[55] John Thomas, *The challenge of a deist accepted* (London: Hurst, 1831), pp. 50, 64 f.

Scripture's origins and authority

Indeed, for F. C. Oetinger (d. 1782) the Bible provided an 'überweltlichen Realismus'. J. T. Beck (d. 1878) considered the Bible to be a living organism which for him was sufficient for all ethical direction.[56] In Britain, Charles Simeon had interpreted 'inspiration' to mean that Scripture as a whole was written just as the two tables of Decalogue were, although with inexactness on philosophical and scientific matters.[57] Robert Haldane's influence through *The Record* from the early 1830s meant that 'infallibility and verbal inspiration throughout the bible' was articulated long before the Oxford movement, such that it is better to see it as reaction to a common enemy, liberalism,[58] although it should be admitted that Haldane influenced Louis Gaussen's *Theopneustia* (1841) which was clearly also anti-Romanist. *The Record* in the 1890s appealed to Christ's attitude towards the Old Testament to defend its perfection. Henry Martyn contrasted the Bible with the claims of the Qur'an. Philip Doddridge spoke of a 'relative revelation' through Scripture.

The belief in verbal inspiration encouraged the sale of bibles as precious objects. As late as 1800 French Protestants, many of them poor and unlettered, hid bible pages about their persons.[59] The winter months among the 'humble poor' of the countryside were particularly fruitful times for the Bible Society colporteurs who tried not only to sell Gospels and Testaments but to ensure that the contents had been understood.[60] With the non-recognition of provincial synods even after Napoleon's legal guarantee of Protestant worship, the English-backed Bible societies filled the gap in a way that was even more significant than in Switzerland or Germany.[61] The Protestant Bible Society of Paris in 1818 was a start; by 1829 there were 33 biblical departments and 663 auxiliary committees. Local indigenous Bible societies rose up beginning in the 1830s in south-eastern France leading to the formation of the 1864 evangelical

[56] J. Rohls, *Geschichte der Ethik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1999), p. 515.

[57] Nigel Scotland, *Evangelical Anglicans in a Revolutionary Age, 1789–1901* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), p. 130, citing Charles Simeon, *Horae Homileticae* (1833), sermon 2133.

[58] Robert Haldane, *The evidence and authority of divine revelation* (Edinburgh: Oliphant et al., 1816); according to his *The authenticity and inspiration of Scripture* (Edinburgh: John Lindsay, 1828), Scripture's own self-witness (2 Tim. 3:16) alone counted.

[59] A. Encrévé, 'Bibles et sociétés bibliques dans le protestantisme français', in Savart and Aletti (eds.), *Le monde contemporain et la Bible*, pp. 111–32.

[60] *Manuel du colporteur* (1865), in Michèle Sacquin, '"Évangélisez la France!": Les Bibles protestantes dans la France rurale (1814–1870)', *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 218 (2001), pp. 113–41 at p. 130.

[61] Jean-Yves Carluer, 'Colporteurs bibliques et colporteurs evangéliques', *Bulletin du Société de l'histoire Protestante française* 149 (2003), pp. 719–37.

Société biblique de France, which was founded on a view of the infallible or at least sovereign (in later versions) authority of Scripture in religious matters. Through these efforts, by 1854 there were 265 adult Sunday schools, and 365 texts were set for family evening reading. The Haute Loire people knew Bibles better than those in the Ardèche, according to F. Delétra in 1841.[62] The experience of the evangelist Jean Clot by his own testimony is that people were amazed how clear Christianity became when they could read a whole New Testament, in which Mary 'seemed to know her place'.[63] In this clash of cultures, French Reformed were prepared to distinguish less between Scripture and tradition than between apostolic and post-apostolic tradition.[64]

Marcus Dods the elder (1786–1838) had opposed both rationalism and Catholic dogmatism, which he saw as working together to get the BFBS to include the Apocrypha.[65] Marcus Dods the younger (1826–1906) was no less keen on using scriptural authority against similar opponents. As a Christian he insisted that the book contained no material error, and he stated this in reaction to Otto Pfleiderer's *Gifford Lectures*.[66] The lesson of 2 Timothy 4:13 (Paul's cloak at Troas) is something that the Roman Catholic Church could learn from, one of voluntary poverty![67] He resisted the idea that in Scripture the Word, 'this star of heaven, must have its pure beams mingled with the feeble ray of human wisdom, ere thy can be fitted to penetrate and dispel the darkness of Satan's kingdom'.[68] The Baptist C. H. Spurgeon 'learned from the Bible how to think metaphorically, or perhaps more accurately, how to think typologically. He saw in Scripture the types and prototypes of reality. Much of his thinking was a meditation on the biblical types.'[69] The spirit of Congregationalist preaching was in its occasionalism: 'the preacher would choose topics suitable to the times in which his congregation lived. . . . A minister who knew his Bible could always find a text that suited the need of the

[62] Carluer, 'Colporteurs', p. 731.
[63] Sacquin, '"Évangélisez la France!"', pp. 132 f. The polemical atmosphere is indicated by the title of evangelist Napoléon Roussel's *Pourquoi votre curé vous défend-il de lire la Bible?* (1836).
[64] Cf. P. Fath, *Du Catholicisme Romain au Christianisme Évangélique* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1957).
[65] Marcus Dods, *Remarks on the Bible* (Edinburgh: William Whyte, 1828).
[66] Otto Pfleiderer, *Philosophy and Development of Religion: Being the Gifford Lectures Delivered before the University of Edinburgh 1894* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1894).
[67] Dods, *Remarks on the Bible*, pp. 43 f.
[68] Marcus Dods, *The Supernatural in Christianity* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1894), p. 70.
[69] H. O. Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, vol. VI (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), p. 442.

day.'[70] For the Congregationalist Joseph Parker the Bible was contemporary as 'it contains every man's biography'.[71]

There was full awareness of biblical discrepancies, even immoralities.[72] Yet for all the polemic to the right and to the left, what one sees is a moderated, intelligent biblical Christianity emerging out of the fires of criticism. One could speak of the Old Testament as the divine religion of Jesus, perhaps the single most influential factor in the Saviour's own formation. The Bible was an instrument or vessel for bringing Christ to the reader, such that its utility, its power to convert and capture is its divinity. Although the Gospels must be eyewitness accounts, many evangelicals never invested in verbal inspiration or belief in a six-day creation.[73]

Just as the previous century saw Pietism as the other side of the Philosophical Enlightenment coin, so in the nineteenth the force of the Awakening in the 1820s–40s – which focused round 'Bible hours' and discussions in Germany – supported by the spreading branches of Bible societies, not least in Danzig and Königsberg – was a counterweight to too much obsession with higher criticism, as it was in North America. Then there was the phenomenon of Neo-Lutheranism, with Erlangen as its intellectual centre, for whom revelation was seen as a matter of fact (*Thatbestand*), a positive divine action making human redemption possible (John 16:13–15; 1 Cor. 2:10). The divine word was 'objectively' the biblical written word, and also the subjective preached word of faith. August Gottreu Tholuck's John commentary was able to counter Strauss's dismissal of Schleiermacher's view of John as the most reliable Gospel. De Wette, Tholuck wrote, has said that a number of John's expressions glow with a lustre that is more than earthly.[74] If one compares the English-speaking commentaries of Henry and Scott which take up the bottom one-third of each page of mid-Victorian bibles,[75] the theology is not as sophisticated, though it was robust enough in its own way: 'By him not as a subordinate agent, God made the world (Heb. 1:2); not as the workman cuts by his axe, but as the body sees by the eye.' This correlates to a Trinitarian understanding of Elohim in Gen. 1:1. It is probably fair to say that the commentaries of Scott and Henry fired the imagination of the average Protestant: they should not imitate the Israelite settlers or the judges who were the divine agents of wrath to

[70] Old, *Reading and Preaching*, p. 412.
[71] Joseph Parker, *The People's Bible: Discourses upon Holy Scripture*, 25 vols. (London: Hazell, Watson & Viney, 1885), vol. 1, p. 2.
[72] T. Larsen, *Crisis of Doubt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 244.
[73] Larsen, *Crisis of Doubt*, p. 165.
[74] A. Tholuck, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1860), p. 69.
[75] Condensed by the Rev J. McFarlane (Glasgow, 1858), p. 104.

punish worse offenders, nor use Deborah as precedent for putting women in charge of the church. John Kitto's *Bible History* of 1841 skipped Genesis's early chapters and agreed with William Hales's (working from Josephus) correction of Ussher, adding 1,407 years on to the age of the earth, which would allow the world to repopulate by the time of Abraham. Kitto could see no divine approval in the murder of Sisera by Jael, as Rudolf Kittel would agree in his 1929 commentary. Kitto and Marcus Dods no longer thought that the judges ought to have known the law of Moses and so had lower expectations of the likes of the 'morally primitive' Jephthah set against the noble heroine that was his daughter.[76] There was even the likes of T. Rhondda Williams, warning that Samson shows children how *not* to think of God's urgings. Perhaps Samson just tired of being decent, thought the Methodist Clovis Chappell in the early 1900s.[77]

For Bishop Colenso, again, the problem was with biblical numbers. Aaron calling all the Israelites in front of the door of the tabernacle in Leviticus 8:3 would have been impossible; 250 births a day would have worn Aaron and his two sons out had they acted according to Leviticus 12:5–7![78] The Colenso case is arguably more interesting for its popular reception than for the writings of the protagonists. History was being 'made into a branch of arithmetic' as F. D. Maurice put it in a letter to J. Dais on 23 September 1862.[79] As early as 1863 A. P. Stanley, the Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Oxford, attacked Colenso and asserted that the heart of the Bible did not lie in its numerical accuracy. J. B. Lightfoot feared that Colenso's work would 'discredit reasonable enquiry'.[80] Matthew Arnold thought that the message of both Testaments was to believe in God and live a good life, and hated Colenso's pedantry, even though the latter was supported by Jowett.

At Leiden, Abraham Kuenen's moderately critical work described the religion of the prophets as 'ethical monotheism', increasingly spiritual and finally exclusivist. It may be claimed, with some justice, that it was Kuenen's *opponents*, in their desire to keep biblical study and church theology, who together had more of a lasting influence through Theodore Vriezen and the

[76] David M. Gunn, *Judges* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 144 f., 165 f.
[77] Gunn, *Judges*, p. 211.
[78] C. Houtman, 'Colenso Seen by Kuenen', in J. A. Draper (ed.), *The Eye of the Storm: Bishop John William Colenso and the Crisis of Biblical Interpretation* (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2003), pp. 76–103. Also D. Jobling, 'Colenso on Myth or Colenso as Myth? A Response to Timothy Larsen', in Draper (ed.), *The Eye of the Storm*, pp. 64–75.
[79] T. Larsen, 'Bishop Colenso and his Critics', in Draper (ed.), *The Eye of the Storm*, pp. 42–63 at p. 57.
[80] Larsen, 'Bishop Colenso and his Critics', p. 62.

Amsterdam school of M. A. Beek.[81] Through translation by the Unitarian Philip Wicksted 'the first English-reading beneficiaries of Kuenen's mature work on the Pentateuch were Sunday School children in the Manchester area'.[82] Yet it would seem that the moderate criticism of Heinrich Ewald, with its glorious 'Mosaic age' from which there could only be decline, was popularised by A. P. Stanley's *Lectures on the Jewish Church* (1865). Kuenen offered something more pro-Semitic which Julius Wellhausen's dominant model neglected, and this, mediated by William Robertson Smith in the 1870s, along with a notion of biblical prophecy as proof that God liked to make human subjectivity 'objective', had an impact on Anglo-Saxon scholarship and church. Charles A. Briggs would see himself as much a victim as Robertson Smith had been of Scotland's Free Church and was in 1904 moved from the Robinson Chair of Biblical Studies at New York's Union Seminary to 'Theological Encyclopedia and Symbolics' after being found heretical and suspended by the General Assembly of 1893.[83]

For many 'biblical revelation was their only hope'.[84] George Frederick Holmes responded to Auguste Comte's positivism that room for mystery had to be allowed, and his 'faith' was strengthened through his daily Bible reading at Charlottesville in the 1850s and 1860s. H. L. Mansell in the Bampton Lectures of 1859–69 spoke of the 'limitations of the human mind as the necessity for revelation', and Charles Hodge was willing to have him as an ally. This was the same Hodge, the Old Princetonian, who, in the context of his combat against Darwin for the latter's system not being able to account for 'design' in the universe, wrote that 'the Bible is to the theologian what nature is to the man of science'.[85] Meanwhile, after the heat and dust of the Darwinian controversy in the early 1860s, many conservative commentators were prepared to allow that in Genesis 1 the Holy Spirit is picking up the story of a number of ages after the beginning of the universe. While the Free Churchman Robert Candlish (d. 1873) insisted that the Bible contained not the creation speaking of the Creator, but the Creator speaking of the creation, Herbert Ryle wrote

[81] C. Houtman, 'Die Wirkung der Arbeit Kuenens in den Niederlanden', in P. B. Dirksen and A. van der Kooij (eds.), *Abraham Kuenen (1828–1891): His Major Contribution to the Study of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), pp. 29–48 at p. 47.

[82] J. W. Rogerson, 'British Reponses to Kuenen's Pentateuchal Studies', in Dirksen and van der Kooij (eds.), *Abraham Kuenen*, pp. 91–104, at p. 99.

[83] M. S. Massa, *Charles Augustus Briggs and the Crisis of Historical Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), p. 137.

[84] C. D. Cashdollar, *The Transformation of Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 276.

[85] Charles Hodge, 'Introduction', in *Systematic Theology*, pp. 1–188.

sparingly on this matter in his *Genesis* contribution to the famous Cambridge series: like science Genesis 1 recognises a move from the simple-unformed to the complex.[86]

For perhaps the most popular commentator of the second half of the nineteenth century, Franz Delitzsch, the ('Schellingite') conception of the evolution of God from himself was a favourite idea.[87] He represented a wide coalition against the two extremes of 'rationalist' and the 'spiritualising-supercessionist'.[88] In his 1853 Genesis commentary he is clear that only the Bible tells us of *creatio ex nihilo* and resists Max Müller's Babylonian parallelisms; whereas in *The New Commentary on Genesis* a quarter of a century later[89] he prefers to speak of revelation transforming elements of a source shared with the ancient Near Eastern parallels. Now, however, there is no mention of *creatio ex nihilo*, but rather of God fashioning something ordered out of natural disorder.[90] By the time of his son, Fritz, however, the German public were caught up in the 'Bibel und Babel' fight to free 'the true prophetic religion of Jesus' from human construction. On this account, Jesus believed in demons only because his people had been infected by such beliefs during their contact with religious dualists, their Babylonian hosts. Babylonian influence on Jews was to be seen especially in the creation legends of struggle between light and darkness, and this meta-history continues 'under the Bible' through to the Apocalypse. Thus Genesis 1 with its priestly magic and superstition is inferior to Genesis 2. 'Fortunately', Jesus was not really a Jew at all but came to liberate men and women from that superstition.[91]

Arguably the gradual establishment of Marcan priority in the later nineteenth century suited Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* as it led to not only the loss of Matthew 16:18 as the basis of Jesus's ecclesiology but also of the Semitic side of Jesus in the advancement of the mystical Jesus of Albert Schweitzer.[92] In the earlier part of the century W. M. L. de Wette had viewed Judaism and Christianity as opposites, with the latter requiring the divine Word for

[86] Herbert E. Ryle, *Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), p. 4.
[87] S. Wagner, *Franz Delitzsch: Leben und Werk* (Munich: Kaiser, 1978), p. 438; W. Volck (ed.), *Theologische Briefe der Professoren Delitzsch und v. Hofmann* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1891), p. 48.
[88] Franz Delitzsch, *Messianic Prophecies* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1880).
[89] Franz Delitzsch, *Genesis* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889 [German original Leipzig, 1887]), p. 71.
[90] Delitzsch, *Genesis*, pp. 51 ff.
[91] Fritz Delitzsch, *Die grosse Täuschung*, vol. II (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1921)
[92] See W. R. Farmer, 'State *Interesse* and Markan Primacy: 1870–1914', pp. 15–49, and D. B. Peabody, 'H. J. Holzmann and his European Colleagues', pp. 50–131, both in Reventlow and Farmer (eds.), *Biblical Studies and the Shifting of Paradigms 1850–1914*.

it to be free to contradict tradition.[93] Wellhausen's impact was to see the Old Testament as unfortunately moving from freedom to law to ritual,[94] and this kind of attitude would be both a cause and an effect of attitudes towards the Old Testament and Judaism by around 1900.

Whereas for Catholics biblical truth in the form of timeless laws and institutions was understood to be continuing in the history of the church, for Protestants it needed to be seen at work in 'my' individual history. Protestants would want to fight for the reality of interventions both then and now. Felicité Robert de Lammenais inspired nineteenth-century Catholics with a myth of the Bible which accounted for everything, whereas the Bible for Protestants was more an aid to liberty and deliverance from the world.[95] Protestants were more ready to see Jesus as apocalyptic, revolutionary, counter-cultural, or at least counter-decadent (even in Bismarckian Germany). In mid–nineteenth-century Strasbourg, as evidenced by the 'biblical theology' of Édouard Reuss (d. 1891), a 'thinking' Pietism had helped make space for a counter-attack against the Tübingen School. The unity of the New Testament should be found at the start, in the gospel of a spiritual kingdom of God common to all witnesses, not in some end synthesis. Reuss lamented that seventeenth-century 'scholastic' Protestantism had ended up reversing the Middle Ages according to which church tradition, not the witness of Holy Spirit, defines the canon. His sixteen-volume Bible with commentary had 1,000 subscribers from 1876.[96]

At the century's end, the God of the Bible was not to be defined by the Bible but rather by a reflection on 'the divine'. Matthew Arnold attacked 'bible-faith' as too man-centred, for it created a god like us who wants to interfere.[97] According to Arnold it was not Paul but Apollos who promoted the idea of Christ's death as a sacrifice, and Paul removed this idea.[98] Any thoughts of lingering, primitive Jewish notions are to be dispelled by the modern critic who would help Paul to complete his escape from that bondage. Faith for Paul meant feeling Jesus' influence through an attachment to his idea; a holding

[93] W. M. L. de Wette, *Ueber den sittlichen Geist der Reformation in Beziehung auf unsere Zeit, Reformations-Almanach auf das Jahr 1819* (Erfurt: n.p., 1819), pp. 211–34 at p. 286 f., cited by F. Graf, 'Protestantismus II', *TRE*, vol. XXVII, pp. 551–80 at p. 568.

[94] Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1878), pp. 402 ff.

[95] F. Laplanche, *La Bible en France entre mythe et critique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994), pp. 159–210.

[96] A. Caquot, 'Reuss et Renan', *RHPhR* 71 (1991), pp. 437–42.

[97] Matthew Arnold, *God and the Bible* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1875), p. 25.

[98] Matthew Arnold, *St Paul and Protestantism* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1906 [1890]), p. 70.

fast to an unseen power of goodness: *to die with Christ to the law of the flesh, to live with Christ to the law of the mind*.[99] The story of the physical resurrection of Christ was meant as a symbol of eternal resurrection now to righteousness. Much more radical was Lesley Stephen who gave as the reason for renouncing faith his father's belief in 'verbal inspiration'.[100]

Fundamentalism and biblical theology

As we move to consider the Bible in European Protestantism of the twentieth century, the cisatlantic equivalents of *The Fundamentals* and the *Scopes Trial* are not immediately apparent.[101] For Herman Bavinck 'our faith in Scripture increases and decreases according to our trust in Christ'.[102] The Bible's purpose was to convert and inspire faith. It is interesting that in the later twentieth century this gave way to an emphasis on the function of the Bible in sanctification. Some parts of Scripture had more important functions than others. Likewise T. M. Lindsay and James Orr of the United Free Church could speak of the Bible as 'the only record of the redeeming love of God'. To say, as the Princeton school did, that plenary inspiration and inerrancy attached only to the original autographs was logically to undermine what the church was in fact reading. After all, no mention of the original autographs was made in the Westminster Confession or by early modern scholasticism.[103] Progressive revelation allowed the human element of Scripture to be given its due, although this splitting of divine and human would not be without its problems, not least in the mid-1960s continuation by G. C. Berkouwer and, later, Karl Barth. If faith in the 'divine trustworthiness' of the Bible is to be followed by understanding of its 'human dimensions' it would seem that one is moving from the divine mystery to a deeper human mystery. Barthianism 'conceived of theology as exegesis and reflection upon a radically open Word of Christ'.[104]

[99] Arnold, *St Paul and Protestantism*, pp. 47–51.
[100] O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 2 vols. (London: SCM, 1972), p. 113.
[101] Although see Stephan Holthaus, *Fundamentalismus in Deutschland: Der Kampf um die Bibel im Protestantismus des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, 2nd edn. (Bonn: Hänssler Classic, 2003).
[102] H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, 4th edn. (Kampen: Kok, 1928), p. 417, quoted in Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, p. 390.
[103] T. M. Lindsay, 'The Doctrine of Scripture: The Reformers and the Princeton School', *The Expositor* 1 (1895), pp. 278–93, quoted in Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, p. 384.
[104] G. Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000), p. 194.

Another feature linking America and Europe can be seen in the early twentieth-century determination to foreground the Scriptures. The Mennonite Brethren Church of North America's Confession of 1902[105] began: 'We believe with the heart and confess with the mouth before all men according to the contents of the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God.' Twenty years later the Church of Scotland set out its Declaratory Articles according to which the Church of Scotland 'adheres to the Scottish Reformation; receives the Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as its supreme rule of faith and life; and avows the fundamental doctrines of the Catholic faith founded thereupon'. The Westminster Confession was merely 'the principal subordinate standard'. Likewise the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA) had in 1902 published a declaratory article which would allow deviation from 'Westminster' on the issues of election and on the fate of the unbaptised infant that were 'a matter of Scriptural interpretation'. While the ordination vow of ministers, ruling elders, and deacons, as set forth in the Form of Government, 'requires the reception and adoption of the Confession of Faith only as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, nevertheless … the desire has been formally expressed for a disavowal by the Church of certain inferences drawn from statements in the Confession of Faith, and also for a declaration of certain aspects of revealed truth which appear at the present time to call for more explicit statement.' One can see how Scripture's plain and therefore at times unclear sense is being used to undermine perceived speculative dogmatic simplification.

The Bible also served to expand the range of beliefs which were seen as 'central', particularly eschatology. It may have been the sixteenth-century Jesuits Luis del Alacázar and Francisco Ribera who developed the futurist interpretation of the book of Revelation, but the pre-millennial form of this reading (Christ to return to establish a thousand-year reign on earth) took root among some late nineteenth-century Nonconformists. The introduction by the Anglo-Irish founder of the Brethren, John Nelson Darby (d. 1882), of the notion of the rapture and the importance of Israel's restoration as inaugurating the last times reached mass media audiences at first through D. L. Moody's missions and Bible Institute in Chicago and the notes in the Scofield Bible (published in 1909 then 1917 by Oxford University Press!) and its scheme of seven ages or dispensations. More recently it has been expressed through the Dallas Theological Seminary (founded in 1924), Hal Lindsey's film *The*

[105] *Confession of Faith of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America* (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1917).

Late Great Planet Earth and the *Left Behind* series.[106] Christ would come twice: first in the parousia with rapture as per 1 Thessalonians 4, and then to establish an earthly reign at Jerusalem (Titus 2:13). It was noted by Clarence Larkin that Jesus in Luke 4 quotes only Isaiah 61:1 but not verse 2, which is yet to be fulfilled.[107] Around 1920 a coalition of fundamentalists was held together by a common pre-millennial hope which encouraged an anti-social gospel stance, a secularised form of post-millennialism with British sympathisers following the American lead. But James Gresham Machen, while deploring their eschatology, allied with pre-millennialist Baptists on their belief in biblical inerrancy. Spurgeon and Moody were more 'Bible men' than either Calvinist or Arminian.[108] In the early 1920s there was a 'battle for the Bible' in the Baptist Union at a time when Arthur S. Peake's Bible commentary 'disseminated the conclusions of the milder critics',[109] but it seems that it was a small movement in the small world of Nonconformity. On the other hand the 'social gospel' followed the broad outlines of the compassionate Christ rather than the details of the text of the Bible. Both kinds of radicalism spawned forms of counter-culturalism and a *sacrificium voluntatis*, although radical fundamentalist Biblicism speaks in terms of commitment to a concretely expressed divine will, while the social gospel movement addresses the conscience challenged by the prophets and Jesus.

The influence of Darby's interpretations and method can be seen in that at the beginning of the twenty-first century it is estimated that 15 million Americans are dispensationalists who are looking for a literal fulfilment of biblical prophecy with many more (one in five) who believe that the world will end in their time. W. E. Blackstone was a prominent Christian Zionist forging links with Orthodox Jews from 1890 to 1916 with Romans 11 as the theological framework, including a belief that the Jews would have to emerge through tribulation: the 'time of Jacob's trouble' (Jer. 30:7), of which the Holocaust was for A. C. Gaebelein and Lindsey only the beginning.[110] It is often unclear whether Israelis and other Jews are to be converted or just affirmed in their

[106] Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004).

[107] Clarence Larkin, *The Greatest Book on Dispensational Truth in the World* (Glendale, PA: Clarence Larkin Estate, 1918).

[108] D. W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), chap. 1.

[109] D. W. Bebbington, 'Baptists and Fundamentalism in Inter-War Britain', in *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America, 1750–1850* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 297–326 at p. 315.

[110] Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, pp. 149 ff.

religion. The application of the Bible to politics is not for the faint-hearted. The strong belief in quasi-pacifism and fair trade that marked the mainstream of Protestantism was inspired and shaped by strong biblical themes.

Neo-Orthodox and ecumenical use of the Bible

The European Reformed churches have continued to affirm the Scriptures, without 'the aprocrypha' officially. The Dutch official translation of 1637 had been made in the shadow of the Synod of Dort and was worthwhile, for it provoked awe not on account of rhetoric but by its simple call to faith; nevertheless it was considered to be full of inaccuracies. The Leiden translation of 1912 had begun with the translation of the Old Testament in 1899, led by Abraham Kuenen, to open the eyes of the doctrinaire. While 'modern' it lacked the simple aroma of the old Bible beloved by the people. It seemed written by dull schoolmasters.[111] The content even came into question, as in Klaas Schilder's assessment that to write 'god' with a small 'g' was significant.

A reaction to a world that had lost God's way can be seen in Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In prison in March 1944, he had access to the Herrnhuter's Bible Losungen and wrote that Jeremiah 45 (5b) 'would not let him go'.[112] The Bonhoefferian call to follow Christ in the terms of the Sermon on the Mount, a piety learned at the clandestine community he formed at Finkenwald, allowed biblical themes (guilt, reconciliation, hope) to capture the imagination of, for example, the 1989 East German Christians.[113] In Leipzig's Nicolaikirche solidarity was that of the meek as expressed in the theme of the intercessions of 25 September 1989 ('Selig sind die Sanftmütigen'). The New Testament theme of welcoming epochal change as promoted by Ernst Käsemann also bore fruit.[114] From the Bible–Pietism-nourished Swiss Christian socialism of Leonhard Ragaz[115] to Martin Luther King's preaching, Protestantism evinces significant uniformity in its range of answers to the question as to what the Bible demands: faith and holiness. Of King's Boston Seminary dissertation on Jeremiah it can be said: 'nearly every metaphor King used can be traced

[111] F. E. Posthumus Meyes, 'De "Leidsche" vertaling van het NT', in *De Gids* (Leiden: n.p., 1915), vol. III.
[112] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Widerstand und Ergebung* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998), p. 336.
[113] John P. Burgess, *The East German Church and the End of Communism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[114] H.-J. Sievers, *Stundenbuch einer deutschen Revolution* (Zollikon: GZW Verlag, 1990), p. 44.
[115] Leonhard Ragaz, *Die Bibel: Eine Deutung* (Zürich: Diana Verlag, 1947–50).

to a biblical source', and not just that of the Moses who had been to the mountaintop.[116] A connection between justice and the kingdom was evident in the Jubilee 2000 campaign for debt relief whose inspiration has its source in Leviticus 25.

The late twentieth century witnessed a shift from the hermeneutics of the Bible to the hermeneutics of culture: reading and interpreting the signs that activities and structures give off. But these can often have rooting or at least legitimisation in certain texts. Yet perhaps this overlooks the saturation of Protestant culture with the Bible through its literature (a bookish culture still reliant to a remarkable extent on great themes from the Great Book, as Northrop Frye and Walter Jens have observed). Yet in postmodern times the novels of Dutch writers Harry Mulisch and Cees Noteboom are grounded on a Reformed Protestant apparatus, for all that any edifice of faith appears shaky. In the former's *De Ontdekkung van de Hemel*[117] the hero is liquefied and translated into the ether while the anti-hero is destroyed by a meteorite.

Protestantism's overfamiliarity with the sound of the great concepts 'so dulled by multiple accommodations to prevailing habits of thought ... that they function only as ciphers'[118] could drive it to despair of any access to meaning through language. However, the use of the Bible increasingly as the foyer for ecumenism, and not only in ecumenical Bible translations, is one sign of its ongoing vitality. French ecumenical translations of 1975 and 1988 show a deference by Catholics to Protestant biblical concerns in not using *la Bible de Jérusalem* and separating off the Deuterocanonical books.[119] Even if 'tout protestant fut pape, une bible à la main', according to the Renaissance French poet Nicolas Boileau, Satire 12[120] it should not be concluded that Protestantism is about a divine word received by a 'bookish' faithful. Liberal Protestant critics have usually been interested in the values, the prophets, the Jesus behind the text, and while conservative Protestantism might seem in danger of displacing the Reformation's insistence on Christ as material principle, yet there have been very few self-confessing fundamentalists who hold to scriptural inerrancy for its own sake rather than for the sake of Christ. However, the formal principle of *sola scriptura* means that it is a text which has the last word among all our words, a text which synthesises persons (even Christ and the apostles), events, ideas and kerygmatic challenge. Those Protestants who have

[116] Drew D. Hansen, *The Dream* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003).
[117] Harry Mulisch, *The Discovery of Heaven* (London: Viking Books, 1994).
[118] M. Welker, *Creation and Reality* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), p. 4.
[119] Delforge, *La Bible en France*, pp. 290–5.
[120] Olivier Millet and Philippe Robert, *Culture biblique* (Paris: PUF, 2001), p*.

abandoned a lectionary even so do proceed with the Bible by a *lectio continua* and this arguably gives less encouragement for less fixed Old Testament–New Testament correspondences as a result, whereas the Catholic Bible is communicated by a liturgical channel (and its impact reinforced by repetition and gesture) and is thus arguably more alive to the resonances of the two Testaments. Yet many Protestant churches do find a corresponding reading from the other Testament.

Conclusion

The Bible was an inspiration, whatever the range of views of the nature of its inspiration. It became heavily contested by the extremes of radical biblical criticism and dispensationalism, largely because for Protestantism it was so important. Protestants had significantly fewer 'means of grace' than Catholics. Yet it should not be said that *sola scriptura* meant that they were non-creedal: that was and remains an exceptional position within Protestantism. Baptists with a keen interest in eschatology are no less committed than Lutherans, Anglicans and Reformed to the traditional central truths of Christian confession. The Bible spoke through liturgy as well as preaching, no less through extempore than set prayers. However Scripture is read in such a way as to inspire Christians to respond to and even make history, in a way less common in Catholic circles. This period saw certain features of the Bible foregrounded – its spiritual wisdom and experience for Pietists, ethical teaching for Enlightened people, its poetic rather than scientific approach to reality for Romantics, a balancing act between fideism and radical historicism in the later nineteenth century where the Bible's origins rather than content mattered, its models of Christ and church for an ecumenical movement somewhat in retreat from the world and of some theologies of history for those denying the end of history.

28

New churches: Pentecostals and the Bible

EDMUND J. RYBARCZYK

Who are the new churches?

This section is a study of biblical use among 'new churches,' a designation that is itself rather arbitrary, especially given that the preponderance of new churches is Pentecostal in nature. It is true that the recent and asymmetrical spread of both Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement across the world makes the label 'new' rather fitting. After all, both Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement are twentieth-century developments. However, both have historical Christian roots, which suggests that 'new churches' as a designation is only partially accurate.

Charismatics are those Christians variously within the Roman Catholic Church and/or Protestant denominations who, owing to internal developments in the 1960s, both accept as being biblical and practice spiritual gifts such as prophecy, healings, words of knowledge, words of wisdom and speaking in tongues (Rom. 12:3–8; 1 Cor. 12:1–12, 28). Especially in the last several decades those churches that have experienced tremendous growth have done so primarily because of the Charismatic movement, a 'new' movement within those groups; the preponderance of this growth has occurred in the southern hemisphere, where the denizens already embrace an open universe.

For their part classical Pentecostals are those Protestants who, beginning early in the twentieth century in the United States, left their former denominations (e.g. Methodist, Holiness, Baptist, Christian Missionary Alliance) and established new ones; they wanted to escape the 'cold formalism' of denominationalism and experience fresh moves of the Holy Spirit. Despite their rather ahistorical nature, Pentecostals have roots that go back to the sixteenth-century Reformation, roots primarily running through the Wesleyan–Holiness and Baptist churches.

As of 2006 there are just over 2 billion Christians in the world. Of those, 596 million comprise Charismatics, classical Pentecostals and varying shades

of what some designate as Independent, Apostolic, or neo-Pentecostal churches.[1] This means that almost one-third of all Christians are 'new'. To help put this development into perspective, Pentecostals outnumber all the other Protestants in the world combined.

The bulk of new-church Christians in the world are not a part of any formal denomination, making their classification difficult. Classical Pentecostals are typically defined as those who hold that baptism in the Holy Spirit has as its initial evidence speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*). Pentecostal denominations in the United States continue to maintain the centrality of tongues, but those around the world place less emphasis thereon. Globally there are a multitude of racial, cultural, national, economic and indigenous features that are part and parcel of contemporary Pentecostalism. Scholars say that it may therefore be more accurate to speak of pentecostalisms in order to account for the diversity.

Despite the many local variations, throughout this study the term Pentecostals will be used because almost all of the designated Independent, Apostolic and neo-Pentecostal churches are of a pentecostalised character: a spirituality and practice that affirms supernatural bodily healings, prophecies, transformation of problems in this life including political struggles, power encounters between evil spirits and the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, a free-church/low-church ecclesiology, a commitment to the authority of Scripture and a general belief that the Christ's return is imminent.

At the most basic level the global church is therefore experiencing tremendous transformation. As Russell Spittler, a long-time Assemblies of God scholar, aptly put it, 'Christendom is being pentecostalized'. Approximately one-tenth of the world's Roman Catholics now identify themselves as Charismatic. Entire countries are being reshaped by Pentecostalism. Lagos in Nigeria is perhaps the most Pentecostal city in the world. In China there are some 80 million members in pentecostalised churches. The largest Pentecostal church in the world is in Seoul, South Korea: David (Paul) Yonggi Cho is pastor to more than 240,000 people who attend Yoido Full Gospel Church.

'Perception is reality.' When it comes to how Pentecostals are viewed by their fellow believers throughout Christendom, that axiom is unfortunately true more often than not. Pentecostals are stereotypically viewed as spiritual enthusiasts who blindly follow the Spirit more regularly than they follow the Bible. This chapter will challenge that perception.

[1] Barrett et al., 'Missiometrics 2006'.

The worldview of new churches

As is unquestionably the case with any classification of Christians, Pentecostals use their Bible in a manner congruous with their worldview. Indeed, they believe that their worldview and that of the Bible are one and the same. Alternatively stated, Pentecostals do not read the Bible with one set of philosophical or interpretative lenses and then interpret life with a different set of lenses. They would not think to pick up and read the Bible as though it were merely either a book of ancient history, as do so many Christians influenced by the commitments of modernism, or a story book of moralisms or spiritual insights, as do many Christians influenced by the values of postmodernism. And, even though hundreds of millions of Pentecostals today live in quite varied and diverse cultural and philosophical settings, there are three important characteristics that are critical for an understanding of their Bible use.

The first is the belief that they live in an open universe. Unlike many adherents to modern philosophical tenets, Pentecostals do not believe everything that exists is the result of chance (or even that God used chance or evolution to accomplish his purposes), or that the physical universe is all there is, or that this life is all there is. They believe both that God created everything save evil and that there exists another dimension beyond this universe. They believe that the other – consistently described as spiritual – dimension has broken into this existence and has caused things to happen. Equally important, they believe that the other realm *continues* to break into this realm today to both influence people's lives and impact the course of history.

It is a matter of dispute whether belief in an open universe pre-dated Western Pentecostals' interpretation and use of the Bible or whether the Bible itself shaped that belief. In developing countries it is quite clear that belief in an open universe pre-dated Pentecostal Christians' use of the Bible. Given the latter situation, it is not difficult to understand why Pentecostal Christianity has exploded in underdeveloped countries and that historical Protestant Christianity, because it is dramatically more rational, has been slower to take root therein. In all of this, Pentecostalism presents the open universe of biblical Christianity without the constraints of Western rationalism. The strength of this is that Pentecostalism is sociologically and epistemologically fluid, showing amazing adaptability within varying cultural contexts. The weakness is that Pentecostalism is susceptible to both religious syncretism and manipulation by charismatic leaders, in both Western and non-Western contexts.

The second characteristic of the Pentecostal worldview is that it is consistently not ensnared by the epistemology of philosophical modernism. Briefly,

modernism is the broadly constructed package of knowing that emphasised rationality, logic, quantifiable measurement and cause-and-effect verifiability. Those are all helpful factors enabling human knowledge, but they are often ineffective with respect to processing the supernatural or transcendent dimensions of human existence. For instance, modernism's epistemology is not immediately helpful in affirming or processing things such as the spirituality of human intuition, praying in tongues, intercessory prayer, travailing in the Holy Spirit, or interpreting visions and dreams. In short, the a-rational dimensions of Christian life are not very amenable to modernism.[2]

To summarise thus far, Pentecostalism originally was rather paramodern in that it paralleled modernism as a historical movement. Nevertheless it did not accept modernism's thoroughgoing rationalism. Certainly Western Pentecostals are more rational a century after the advent of their movement, and that does affect their biblical hermeneutic. But, in developing countries, modernism still has not taken root sufficiently to preclude widespread belief in the more mystical dimensions of human experience.

The third characteristic is a strong populist character. This is consistently wed to their understanding of what it means to be a member of a Christian community (ecclesiology) and to their position in society (sociology). At the ecclesiological level, Pentecostals' populism is also aptly described by the theological rubric 'the priesthood of all believers'. Pentecostal churches are not organised around a centralised system of clerics, but instead function as a voluntary fellowship. Pastors do not need to complete long years of study; in many instances if they are deemed to have the spiritual gift of leadership they can immediately become pastors. Moreover, it is not just church clerics but everyone who is called to the life and work of the church. Especially formative for this populist character is the conviction that all believers are given spiritual gifts – *charismata* – for both the edification of the church and cooperation with the Spirit of God in establishing Christ's reign. The Holy Spirit comes to and for all believers, and this not least concerning Bible reading.

Encountering the Holy Spirit: hermeneutics

The historical-critical method of biblical hermeneutics was in important ways the product of modernism. The problem with the modernistic hermeneutical aim was that it assumed that there was some unbiased and objective perspective from which one could interpret the biblical texts. Protestant

[2] A-rational need not imply against reason, but apart from reason, or indifferent to reason.

fundamentalists in the United States, aware that the authority of Christianity was being called into question by modern epistemology, sought to establish absolute interpretative certitude in their reading of the Bible. For them historical accuracy was the main goal. For their part, Pentecostals were not disinterested concerning the challenges of modernism, and they often followed the lead of the fundamentalists in constructing their own apologetics. However, the Pentecostal concern was (and is) less about historical accuracy and more about spiritual accuracy, less about historical authority and more about spiritual authority. Pentecostal New Testament scholar Gordon Fee emphatically made this point when he said, 'My point is that true exegesis attempts to engage in the author's *Spirituality*, not just his or her words.'[3] The result of this hermeneutic was that Pentecostals, as Frank Macchia said, 'did not advocate an objective and scientific analysis of the text that alienated the reader from Scripture. They advocated *a participation in the text* that defined one's life and calling as a Christian and a church.'[4]

Together with the miracles of Jesus reported throughout the Gospels, most Pentecostals take as their biblical *locus classicus* the book of Acts. Not only is Acts foundational for their famous position on baptism in the Holy Spirit followed by speaking in tongues (Acts 2:1–16, 10:44–8, 19:1–6), it is also foundational for their open-universe worldview. In Acts they read that the apostles continued to do the same works by the Holy Spirit that Jesus himself had done. Upon Jesus' ascension, the Spirit did not cease being active, He moved dynamically through the apostles (cf. 1 Cor. 12–14). Similarly, Pentecostals assert, the Spirit seeks to be active among the church today, working and moving through the lives of faithful believers. Kenneth Archer defines Pentecostal hermeneutics as follows: 'For Pentecostals, the [biblical] standard was the Book of Acts. They read the whole of Scripture through the Book of Acts as if they were looking forward and backward simultaneously. Therefore, Acts served as their beginning and ending point in the development of biblical doctrines.'[5]

This spiritual background to Acts as *locus classicus* is rooted in the Pentecostals' desire to be apostolic. Whereas the Reformation sought apostolicity chiefly via asserting doctrinal methodology (e.g. *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, *sola fides*), Pentecostals value apostolicity along pneumatological lines.

[3] Fee, *Listening to the Spirit*, p. 11 (emphasis in original). Fee capitalises the word Spirituality because he believes that spirituality for the apostle Paul was always a matter involving the Holy Spirit, and not some nebulous human state of being. Fee is adamant, however, that a text should never be construed to mean what it never meant. Thus, historical and exegetical accuracy are at issue.

[4] Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, p. 50. Earlier quotation from p. 52.

[5] Archer, 'Pentecostal Story', pp. 53–4.

This nuance does not mean that Pentecostals are at all indifferent to doctrinal formulations. After all, even though Pentecostals affirm most of the doctrinal commitments of Evangelical Protestantism, despite being more Arminian on salvation, they are different from Evangelicals precisely because of their doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit.[6] And whereas sacramentalists primarily maintain apostolicity along historical lines (apostolic succession), Pentecostals believe that Acts shows that to be an apostle is to be one through whom the Holy Spirit continues to do the work that Jesus himself was doing. Thus, Christianity involves both words (doctrine) and power (pneumatology). The apostle Paul confirms this understanding: 'For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power' (1 Cor. 4:20; cf. 2:4).

The Pentecostal biblical hermeneutic was motivated negatively by the belief that turn-of-the-twentieth-century Christianity was lacking in power. By returning to Luke's teaching in Acts, they believed they would regain the spiritual power that had been lost within the ages of church history. Obviously this was both a triumphal and naive reading of church history, but the Pentecostals were nevertheless correct in seeing that the apostles themselves experienced profound and dramatic movements of the Spirit in their own lives and ministries. This Acts as *locus classicus* method was positively motivated by a rather precise eschatology involving a prophecy made in Joel 2:28–9: 'And it will come about after this that I will pour out my Spirit on all people; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. And even on the male and female servants I will pour out my Spirit in those days.'[7]

In short, the Pentecostal position is that a latter rain not only occurred on Pentecost, or in the subsequent lives of the apostles, but that it has come today; it is a rain (season) which exceeds the former rain. Archer describes this biblical reading as a 'promise-fulfillment strategy'. God is doing a new thing; this gives Pentecostals confidence that God is with them. God is fulfilling prophecy; it is thus a restorative method of understanding God's work and life. It is a kind of living hermeneutic wherein the gospel is not reduced to static presuppositions.[8] It is a pneumatological–eschatological hermeneutic that resembles Jesus' own teaching throughout the Gospels. Something new was happening as a result of his coming, Jesus declared (Matt. 4:17, 12:41–2; Mark 1:15, 3:22–30;

[6] Pentecostals are not just Evangelicals who embrace Spirit baptism as evidenced by speaking in tongues. Spirit baptism is itself a pneumatological–eschatological complex that is unique within Protestantism. See particularly Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*.

[7] All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.

[8] Archer, 'Pentecostal Story', pp. 49, 55. Earlier quotation from p. 45.

Luke 4:14–21, 11:20), but something more was going to happen when he sent the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; John 14:12, 26, 16:7–15).[9]

As they seek to be spiritual in their understanding of apostolicity, Pentecostals assume that the Bible was written both to be understood and to be put into practice. One should read the Bible, believe it and obey it.[10] In this kind of Bible reading Pentecostals share with fundamentalists a quest for the plain and literal meaning of a text. However, Pentecostals differ from fundamentalists by consistently wanting to know what a passage means for the present. Writing along these lines one Guatemalan pastor said, 'We believe in the word of God; personally the Holy Spirit is my teacher, without him there is no correct interpretation of the scriptures.' A missionary to Thailand echoed that and said, 'The Holy Spirit is able to help us understand the applications for today, [but] today's applications must be consistent with the original application.'[11]

Strongly committed to the belief that the Holy Spirit accompanies the word (Bible), Pentecostals believe that a biblical text can be illuminated by the Spirit at a certain time and season in a way that it was not in early times or seasons. Suddenly a biblical passage can have existential significance. Unexpectedly a portion of Scripture can provide guidance in a manner previously unnoticed. Without warning, the Holy Spirit can command obedience to a biblical pericope. Particularly important in developing nations, the Bible is understood to provide answers for and power over this-worldly needs such as physical illness, hunger, unemployment, family disputes and fighting against unclean spirits. Timothy Cargal summarised the Pentecostal practice in this regard:

> It is this 'deeper significance of the biblical text' which is most emphasized by Pentecostal preachers, for it is after all the 'divine' as opposed to the 'merely human' aspect of Scripture. Thus, expressions such as, 'the Holy Spirit showed (or "revealed") something to me in these verses that I had never seen before,' are commonly heard within Pentecostal sermons. Herein lies the origins of the traditional Pentecostal emphasis upon the multiple dimensions of meaning of the biblical text. . . . Moreover, within a Pentecostal setting these 'illuminated' meanings exercise far more power over Pentecostal believers since they are perceived as carrying divine sanction and authority. Pentecostals have long been aware of the potential for abuse inherent in such claims of pneumatic illumination.[12]

[9] For an emblematic Pentecostal hermeneutic of Jesus' role in this see Jon Ruthven, 'The "Imitation of Christ" in Christian Tradition: Its Missing Charismatic Emphasis', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16 (April 2000), pp. 60–77.

[10] Archer, 'Early Pentecostal Biblical Interpretation', p. 68.

[11] Author's informal survey conducted spring 2007. Subsequent quotations herein from unnamed Pentecostals around the world are from this same survey.

[12] Cargal, 'Beyond the Fundamentalist–Modernist Controversy', p. 175.

A Pentecostal from Phnom Penh in Cambodia sustained this analysis when she recently said, 'The illumination and guidance of the Holy Spirit when interpreting the word of God is important. Pentecostals must be sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and must depend on Him when interpreting the Word of God and not just [rely] on their hermeneutic knowledge or resources.'[13] Some Pentecostals in developing countries are even resentful of the influence of the West on Bible interpretation. One leader in the Philippines said:

> More than half of the Bible was written in narrative and poem. I believe that [Filipino] Pentecostals should not be afraid to use narrative and poetry as legitimate approaches of communication in propagating their Pentecostal beliefs and convictions. [Many] of the Pentecostals are deeply influenced by the Aristotelian logic and presupposition of the West … this should be stopped … [we need] to begin to conceptualise the 'Asianness' of the Bible to make it appropriate in the context and mind set of the Filipinos.

Macchia describes this hermeneutic as a 'biblicist' method in that the Pentecostals 'believed themselves capable of entering and living in the world of the Bible through the ministry of the Spirit without the need for consciously engaging the hermeneutical difficulties of reading an ancient text from a modern situation'. After all, God was 'the same yesterday, today, and forever', so believers ought to be able to 'experience what the Bible puts forth as living truth'.[14] Archer calls this hermeneutic a 'concordistic' approach. The starting assumption is that the world/context of the Bible is quite similar to one's own. Based on that assumption, one then reads the Bible for oneself, or for a local community, and looks for 'common ground in real life situations'. Pentecostals, upon finding these correspondences, 'believe that God is speaking to them and can do the same things for them'. In this way 'the Bible therefore has immediacy and relevance to life experiences'.[15]

Because the thrust of Pentecostal Bible reading is spiritual in character – that is variously to learn how to imitate the apostles along spiritual lines, to establish a biblical grounding for spiritual power, and to experience the Holy Spirit in the text – the emphasis in their hermeneutic falls upon God's role in biblical authorship. For instance, Pentecostals regularly quote 2 Peter 1:20–1 to

[13] The Cambodian woman also qualified that 'Christianity is new here after the long years of civil war and genocidal regime (which destroyed all forms of religion) [so that] Christian reference works like Bible dictionaries, encyclopaedias [and] commentaries are not yet available.'

[14] Frank Macchia, 'Theology, Pentecostal', in Burgess and van der Maas (eds.), *New International Dictionary*, 1122 (hereafter *NIDPCM*).

[15] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, p. 226.

defend the authority of Scripture: 'But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but people moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.' In the interpretation of that verse the Pentecostal emphasis clearly falls upon 'moved by the Holy Spirit', and not upon 'people' in their historical contexts. Grant Wacker said that for early Pentecostals the Bible had 'somehow escaped the vicissitudes of historical construction' so that the 'writers of the Bible had not been influenced in any truly significant way by the settings in which they lived'.[16] It was almost as though Scripture had 'dropped from heaven as a sacred meteor'.[17] It deserves qualification that this simplistic hermeneutic is nuanced today where Western Pentecostal missionaries have been present in developing nations. For instance, one pastor in the Philippines said, 'Pentecostals utilise the literal, historico-critical, narrative way of interpreting the Bible. They see the role of the Spirit in interpreting the Bible.'

Within the Pentecostal tradition scholars have sought to correct this divine more-than-human imbalance. For instance, New Testament scholar Gordon Fee argues that the Bible is a divine–human product. That the Holy Spirit inspired it gives the Bible its eternal relevance; God spoke it so we cannot relativise it as one more piece of historical writing. But that human writers wrote within their own historical contexts means that the Bible needs to be rightly interpreted and then applied.[18] Similarly, Russell Spittler said, '[the] Pentecostal reading of Scripture [is] a simple, natural and revered, though often ahistorical use of the words of Scripture both in the nourishment of personal piety and in setting a mandate for evangelism as the chief agenda for the church'. This method is 'not so much wrong as limited'. Spittler suggests a method that is more inclusive. The following is a lengthy quotation, but in important ways reflects the state of Western Pentecostal hermeneutics:

> Exegesis puts one into the vestibule of truth; the Holy Spirit opens the inner door. For this reason as a Christian teacher, primarily concerned to link subjective piety with scientific (historic) objectivity … I must ask historical (and therefore linguistic, archaeological) questions, not acting as if Scripture was sent to me alone or to my tradition only. But I must also ask a utilitarian, pietistic question: how does God speak to me and to my communities (family,

[16] Grant Wacker, 'Playing for Keeps: The Primitivist Impulse in Early Pentecostalism', in Richard T. Hughes (ed.), *The American Quest for the Primitive Church* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), pp. 196–219 at p. 198.

[17] Grant Wacker, 'Functions of Faith in Primitive Pentecostalism', *Harvard Theological Review* 77 (1984), pp. 353–75 at p. 365.

[18] Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1982), pp. 15–27.

> school, local church, denomination) through this text? The interest of the university lies in history (legitimate). The interest of the Bible school lies in piety (also legitimate). The invitation to Christian scholarship consists in the balanced blend of both.
>
> I am quite prepared to confess unresolved tensions in the methodological mix of history and piety. [The historical-critical method for studying Scripture is] both legitimate and necessary, but *inadequate*. It is legitimate, because history is the sphere of God's dealings with the world and the stage of revelation. It is necessary . . . in order to milk from Scripture the revealed truth it provides. But it is inadequate, because – and here my Pentecostal heritage shows – the end of biblical study cannot consist alone in historical dates or tentative judgments about complicated and conjectured literary origins. The end of biblical study consists rather in enhanced faith, hope, and love for both the individual and the community. The historical-critical method is inadequate, in other words, because it does not address piety. After all, love (piety), not knowledge (history), counts most in the end (1 Cor. 8:1b).[19]

Still other scholars of Pentecostalism, themselves affirming both that the Holy Spirit comes today and speaks through the biblical text and that the reader has an important role in the encounter with the text, are eager to establish how it is that Pentecostalism and a postmodern hermeneutic, with its commitment to language and story, are compatible. The flourishing of such study has been remarkable.[20] However, not all are convinced that the answer will be found in postmodern categories.[21]

Pentecostals use the Bible in devotional and spiritualised ways, as the above well attests, but that is not the only way they use it. The Bible is also the foundational document for their theology and mission. True, Pentecostals have not done much by way of philosophical or systematic theology, but they

[19] Spittler, 'Scripture and the Theological Enterprise' (emphasis mine). Earlier quotation from p. 75.

[20] Becker, 'A Tenet under Examination'; Scott Ellington, 'History, Story, and Testimony: Locating Truth in a Pentecostal Hermeneutic', *Pneuma* 23:2 (2001), pp. 245–64; Paul Lewis, 'Towards a Pentecostal Epistemology: The Role of Experience in Pentecostal Hermeneutics', *Spirit and Church* 2:1 (2000), pp. 95–125; Robert Baker, 'Pentecostal Bible Reading: Toward a Model of Reading for the Pentecostal Reception of Postmodernism', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 7 (1995), pp. 34–48; Jackie David Johns, 'Pentecostalism and the Postmodern Worldview', *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 7 (1995), pp. 73–96; Gerald Sheppard, 'Biblical Interpretation after Gadamer', *Pneuma* 16:1 (1994), pp. 121–41; Richard Israel, Daniel Albrecht and Randal McNally, 'Pentecostals and Hermeneutics: Texts, Rituals, and Community', *Pneuma* 15:2 (1993), pp. 137–61; Cargal, 'Beyond the Fundamentalist–Modernist Controversy'; Joseph Byrd, 'Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Theory and Pentecostal Proclamation', *Pneuma* 15:2 (Fall 1993), pp. 203–14.

[21] Poirier and Lewis, 'Pentecostal and Postmodernist Hermeneutics'; Robert Menzies, 'Jumping Off the Postmodern Bandwagon', *Pneuma* 16:1 (1994), pp. 115–20.

have been consistently committed to working a biblical theology devoid of dogmatic concerns that have sometimes burdened those in other traditions. More commonly, Pentecostals take the Scriptures and organise them along thematic lines. This biblical theology is consistently oriented around kerygmatic (preaching, testimonies, evangelism), church-as-fellowship (koinonia), and doxological functions; functions which all have both serving God and glorifying him as their focus.[22]

The authority of Scripture

Headed into the twentieth century, classical Pentecostals did not want to organise or form denominations. They believed 'formalism' choked off the free and spontaneous move of the Holy Spirit. And because they valued spontaneity in their services and prayer meetings they did not want to follow established liturgies; that their own services and meetings followed consistent and even precise forms was not an apparent problem for them. Unfortunately over time the pendulum swung too far. This free-form spirituality unwittingly paved the way for the barely educated, the prophetically overreaching and the sincere but overzealous ministers and lay persons to proclaim things that quickly caused pastoral problems in the local churches.

These proclamations could involve lifestyle issues. For example, amid the Shepherding controversy of the 1970s in the United States Charismatic pastors were claiming to have an 'apostolic' mantle; they believed their authority to be exempt from question or critique. In some horrible instances pastors instructed marriages to be ended for the sake of the Lord's purposes. Obviously this was an abuse of leadership, and it led both to moral failures by some pastors and disillusionment among lay people. To counter those sins and errors, observant Pentecostal pastors and leaders emphasised that the Bible taught accountability within the church (1 Cor. 6:5, 10:15, 11:13; 1 Tim. 3:1–10, 6:1–5) and responsibility for the exercise of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:7, 14:32–3).

Erroneous proclamations could also involve doctrinal issues. For example, some early Pentecostals reasoned that spiritual experiences after conversion could be likened to powerful chemical compounds such as 'lyddite, oxidite, and dynamite', and that one needed all three of those or more to be fully empowered for Christian life and witness. This was excessive, and Pentecostal leaders turned to Scripture to show that while there was an experience of the Holy Spirit possible after conversion (Acts 2:1–13, 8:12–17, 10:44–6, 11:14–16,

[22] Macchia, 'Theology, Pentecostal', p. 1121.

15:7–9), there was no biblical precedent mandating necessary multiple experiences before Christians could do the work of the gospel.

More commonly and more problematically, there were prophetic statements that assigned the – usually imminent – date for Jesus' second coming; while they truly believed that the end was near, these statements were not infrequently manipulative means to get people to come forward to the altar and repent of their sins. Seasoned believers and leaders realised that things were getting out of hand. To quell these abuses they consistently turned to Matthew 24:36, where Jesus said, 'but of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone'.

The point here is that even though Pentecostals value a posture of openness to the leading of the Spirit in daily life (see more below), they did not and do not only secondarily turn to the Bible for authoritative counsel. Earlier we established how foundational the Bible is for the Pentecostal worldview. It was and is the archetypal source for their worldview and theology. But the above noted kinds of abuses caused the classical Pentecostals to insist upon the authority of the Bible, and that quite quickly, within formalised confessions of faith. When the Assemblies of God gathered at the first organisational meeting in 1914 their stated purpose was 'to recognize Scriptural methods and order for worship, unity, fellowship, work and business for God, and to disapprove of all unscriptural methods, doctrines and conduct'.[23] Some hundred years later that emphasis upon biblical authority remains, and this is not only the commitment of Westerners. A Nigerian pastor/scholar said, 'My understanding is that Pentecostals, generally speaking, believe, fundamentally, that the Bible contains nothing else but the Word of God, and so, whatever is found in that Scripture must be taken as impeccable truth. Thus, the biblical authority is viewed as binding, with particular reference to believers or faithful Christians that the Pentecostals are aspiring to be.'

To substantiate the point about a broadly shared view of Scripture's authority, below are official statements from the four largest Pentecostal denominations.

Church of God in Christ

> We believe that the Bible is the Word of God and contains one harmonious and sufficiently complete system of doctrine. We believe in the full inspiration

[23] 'Preamble and Resolution of Constitution', *Minutes of the General Council of the Assemblies of God Held at Hot Springs, Arkansas, April 2–12, 1914* (Findlay, OH: Gospel Publishing House, 1914), pp. 1–16, p. 4.

> of the Word of God. We hold the Word of God to be the only authority in all matters and assert that no doctrine can be true or essential, if it does not find a place in this Word.

Assemblies of God

> The Scriptures Inspired. The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are verbally inspired of God and are the revelation of God to man, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct.
> - 2 Timothy 3:15–17 [KJV/NIV]
> - 1 Thessalonians 2:13 [KJV/NIV]
> - 2 Peter 1:21 [KJV/NIV]

Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee)

> The Church of God believes the whole Bible to be completely and equally inspired and that it is the written Word of God. We believe: in the verbal inspiration of the Bible . . .

United Pentecostal Church International

> The UPCI holds a fundamental view of the Bible: 'The Bible is the only God-given authority which man possesses; therefore all doctrine, faith, hope, and all instructions for the church must be based upon and harmonize with the Bible.' The Bible is the Word of God, and therefore inerrant and infallible. The UPCI rejects all extrabiblical revelations and writings, and views church creeds and articles of faith only as the thinking of men.

The Bible in its ecclesial context

The Bible is the foundation and interpretive guide for pentecostalised Christianity. Pastors and evangelists consistently base their sermons on a passage of Scripture. Using the above hermeneutic, they often note what that probably meant in its context, but the bulk of their homiletic is oriented towards contemporary application. The thrust will be on what God is saying *today*, through the given passage, to the gathered believers. Like Evangelicals, Pentecostals preach about salvation through Jesus Christ alone; they believe they are thus being obedient to Jesus' Great Commission (Matt. 28:19). But in contrast to Evangelicals, Pentecostals use the Bible in order to emphasise the power of God's intervention through the Holy Spirit. They believe that signs and wonders regularly accompanied the apostles' own preaching, as noted in the Bible, and that it should be so today.

Precise guidelines and rules for this kind of contemporised use of the Bible are not well articulated among Pentecostals. The Pentecostal hermeneutic is learned mostly through the church's kerygmatic practice. Because there is little formalised church doctrine or dogma – Pentecostal denominations' faith statements are consistently brief – most Pentecostals have little interest in the historical Protestant concerns about church tradition versus biblical authority. Indeed, Pentecostals are comfortable with phrases that speak to methodological commitments such as 'rule of faith', 'spirit of the Bible', 'heart of the message' and 'tenor of Scripture', but they have not been self-reflective on the role and place of church tradition for biblical interpretation.

Most Pentecostal ministers are trained in Pentecostal schools where they are inculcated with a strong sense of biblical authority. Even within such schooling there is seldom clarified a relationship between accepted church teaching and biblical instruction; it is assumed that the former logically and rather obviously follows the latter. With such a high regard for biblical authority, it is no surprise that Pentecostals are consistently some of the most conservative believers in Christendom. A Barna poll found that some 80 per cent of United States Pentecostals believe that 'the Bible is totally accurate in all that it teaches'.[24]

Within Pentecostal worship services hands are raised to praise God, congregants shout 'Amen', 'Hallelujah' and 'Glory to God', banners are waved, hands are laid on the sick and needy, people kneel in reverence, hands are exuberantly clapped, and people prostrate themselves in humility before God; these are all understood to be biblically enjoined behaviours. Even in their worship Pentecostals seek to be biblical. The Bible is also the primary basis for established Pentecostal rituals. Following the precedent set by the sixteenth-century Reformers, the Pentecostals maintain that only those rituals instituted by Jesus himself are obligatory. In the local church this means that water baptism and communion – and, for some, foot washing (John 13:1–17) – are the broadly accepted Christian ordinances. Baptism is reserved for believers; not only does the Bible not describe or prescribe infant baptism, Pentecostals believe that this runs against salvation as a voluntary relationship, something of which infants are incapable. As it did among the apostles, the emphasis falls upon the believer's state of heart (Acts 18:8; 1 Pet. 3:21), rather than the nature or accoutrements of the ritual.

The Bible does not present a distinctly sacramental view of Jesus' ordinances, so Pentecostals are historically non-sacramental, though there is some diversity on this. The Christian meal is a memorial that is thoroughly

[24] See www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=92.

Christocentric: Jesus' substitutionary death is remembered, the fellowship that he established among his believers is celebrated, and his imminent return is expected; all in keeping with a straightforward reading of the Bible.

The Bible's role in the Pentecostal ecclesial ethos is also evident in that Pentecostals rather quickly began to establish Bible schools in the early twentieth century. The Assemblies of God organised as a fellowship in 1914 and, although they could not reach an immediate consensus on how to start their own Bible school, began encouraging their members to enrol in other 'full Gospel' Bible schools. The truth is that these earliest Pentecostal schools were small; most had fewer than forty students. Nevertheless, the speed with which these were opened attests to the early emphasis upon the role and place of Scripture. Today in the United States there are more than a hundred Bible schools, colleges and universities; many of these have student bodies in the thousands. The largest is Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Around the world there are more than three hundred Pentecostal Bible institutions.

There were many reasons that early Pentecostals built these schools. First, they wanted their pastors, evangelists and missionaries to be equipped for ministry. If the Pentecostal message and experience were to be exported around the world, then a basic Bible knowledge was required. And basic it was. At many early twentieth-century schools Pentecostals advertised that the Bible was the only textbook. Spirituality was valued more than academic performance. Pentecostals were leery of higher education. They believed that the historical Christian denominations had lost their spiritual vitality in part owing to their hyper-intellectualism. Seminaries were decried as spiritual 'cemeteries' for the effect they had on a love for God's word. And after all, Jesus' own apostles had not been formally educated. This mistrust of intellectualism held firm until the 1960s, when Pentecostals finally began to open up to a liberal arts form of education. Secondly, Bible schools provided a favourable environment for inculcating and teaching the movement's distinctive characteristics and doctrines. Thirdly, Pentecostals wanted to preclude the kind of pastoral and doctrinal problems noted above, and a basic Bible education reduced the risk of their occurrence.[25]

Another way the Scriptures are promoted is through Bible quiz competitions. Taking their cues from previously existing denominations' catechetical training, this form of competition began in the 1950s and involves simple question-and-answer formats. Young people memorise biblical passages and facts. Then they go to regional and national events in the United States where

[25] Lewis Wilson, 'Bible Institutes, Colleges, Universities', in *NIDPCM*, pp. 372–80.

they compete against youth from other churches both inside and outside their own denominations.[26]

The Bible in daily personal use

Pentecostal Christians are regularly taught to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. When they receive the Spirit's guidance believers may not always know why they are being told to do something, but they are taught to trust that the Spirit knows the reasons for both His guidance and the situation. The Spirit might have very precise and particular guidance for daily situations.

Sometimes spiritual guidance can come through the advice of fellow Christians. At other times this guidance comes through words of wisdom or words of knowledge from fellow believers, communications that are commonly presaged with 'I feel like the Lord is saying . . .', or 'the Lord wants you to know that . . .'. Many pastors teach their flocks to pay attention to how the Spirit might be speaking into their hearts during prayer or Bible reading, alternately expressed as how the Spirit is intuitively speaking. Pastors commonly cite 1 Kings 19:12 (KJV) concerning the 'still small voice' through which the Lord spoke to Elijah. When believers are unsure about the precise meaning of the instruction, or whether the word was from the Lord or not, they are instructed to test it against the 'plumb line' of Scripture. If the believer is being told to do something that violates the plain meaning of Scripture, then that word is not from the Lord. One young Pentecostal pastor's story typifies this kind of openness to prophetic guidance. After six months as an associate pastor this minister found out that the head pastor had been involved in an incestuous relationship. The head pastor refused to make himself accountable to the church elders, so the new associate pastor went to the Lord in prayer. During prayer the Holy Spirit put the thought in his mind, 'read Ezekiel 12:1–3'. The young pastor did not know what Ezekiel 12:1–3 said, but he obediently read that text which said, 'Son of man, you live in the midst of the rebellious house . . . therefore, son of man, prepare for yourself baggage for exile. Then you will go out at evening in their sight, as those going into exile.' Astounded as to the text's specificity, and believing that the Spirit had just spoken through the text in a manner that was not antagonistic to the text's original meaning, the associate pastor left the church. Sadly, the head pastor continued in illicit relationships. The Lord had decisively spoken to the young pastor through the Bible.

[26] George Edgerly, 'Bible Quizzing', in *NIDPCM*, pp. 381–2.

Pastors regularly teach that if the believer is being told to do something that violates the tenor of the Bible, as maintained in the shared ethos of the local church, then that too is not from the Lord. Along these lines the language of 'anointing' and 'witness', following the teachings of 1 John 2:27 and 5:7, is common among Pentecostal pastors. The Spirit is present to guide believers, if they will be open to His speaking. Pentecostals believe there is a spiritual dynamic wrought by the Holy Spirit that can occur in the Christian's life whereby one is given very specific words from the Lord through the Bible in ways that are not antagonistic to the original meaning.

For example, in the course of eighteen months a Pentecostal pastor found himself being crushed by the weight of busy-ness. The father of a new baby boy that cried through the nights, he was taking several classes at seminary, and was heavily involved in ministry. On top of all that, both his father and mother had died in the not-too-distant past at relatively young ages due to cancer. When this pastor moved into a period of deep existential anguish he began to both lose weight and hyperventilate. To add to the pressure, the doctor he saw told him it was likely that he too had cancer! Adding to his state of mind the pastor had been deeply immersed in Calvinism in his seminary readings. As a result, he began to seriously wonder whether he was one of the elect. One night, while he was cleaning the sanctuary, he fell at the church altar and cried out, 'O God, I need to know if there's any point in talking to you.' A strong impression came to his mind: 'Read Deuteronomy 7:6.' Not knowing what that passage said he grabbed a bible and read, 'For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.' The pastor experienced grace and powerful liberty that was soon self-authenticating: his health improved, and he in fact did not have cancer. He knew in his heart that he was one of the Lord's own.

Pentecostal pastors consistently admonish the laity to practice daily devotions. One indigenous pastor in Guatemala said, 'Devotionals are the way through which God talks, and they should be a permanent search of communication with God.' A time of day is to be set aside for worship, prayer and Bible reading, but it rarely involves careful or critical Bible study using lexicons, commentaries or historical resources. This means that whereas Pentecostals read their Bibles more than Christians in other traditions, they also read them 'poorly'. They are not adept at reading verses, passages or chapters in their context.[27] In their daily devotions Pentecostals emphasise the divine nature

[27] Fee, 'Why Pentecostals Read their Bibles Poorly'.

over the human nature of Scripture. This means that they read the Bible as to how it or the Spirit might be speaking personally to them, but they regularly ignore or are indifferent to what the text meant in its original context in the mind of the biblical authors. Again, Bible reading is an opportunity to keep oneself accountable and attuned to the Lord.

A strength of the Pentecostal daily use of the Bible is that, unlike its perception among many Protestant fundamentalists, the Bible is only a pointer. Put differently, Pentecostals generally make God their focus, not the Bible. Though they have a high regard for its authority, the Bible is not an end in itself. It is the God-given means to God himself. God communicates through the Bible, but his goal is to move us towards Him, not the Bible.[28]

Devotional practice keeps Pentecostals at the ready to worship and pray. But this devotional reading of the Bible can also be quite simplistic, and can make Pentecostals susceptible to spiritual fads. When *The Prayer of Jabez* was published in 2000,[29] Pentecostals bought it by the tens of thousands. After all, it did not require great acumen to understand, it was based on a biblical passage (1 Chron. 4:10), it spoke to this-worldly needs, and it involved asking the Lord to do the miraculous and extraordinary. To be fair, Christians of all traditions have their succinct prayers; the Roman Catholics pray the Ave Maria, the Eastern Orthodox the Jesus prayer. But the Pentecostals were drawn to a little devotional like *The Prayer of Jabez* precisely because it was framed as a biblical teaching. Promise boxes – little cardboard or plastic boxes, sometimes shaped like loaves of bread – with cards that have random Bible verses on them are not infrequently on Pentecostals' tables or lampstands; in this way Scripture verses can be read daily, sometimes with the hope that the Lord will speak personally through them.

Despite these tendencies the Pentecostal use of the Bible is one that is itself biblical through and through. The Bible was written to communicate God's word in particular time-bound situations, but has an abiding relevance that speaks to all generations. It seems likely that Pentecostals have unwittingly circumvented some of the traps and assumptions of both modernistic and postmodernistic hermeneutics. Gordon Fee nicely summed up the Pentecostal way of reading the Bible when he said, 'Because we believe Scripture is God's Word, by which God addresses us, that means that Scripture is the subject and we are the object.' 'The key is', he continued, 'to come to the text with

[28] Theme drawn from Becker, 'A Tenet under Examination', pp. 35–40.

[29] Bruce Wilkinson, *The Prayer of Jabez: Breaking Through to the Blessed Life* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Press, 2000).

an absolute conviction that it is *God's* word; that here God speaks and we listen.'[30]

Conclusion

As the above has reiterated, Pentecostals are not spiritual enthusiasts who blithely follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and thereby navigate life using narrowly subjective means. They affirm the authority of Scripture and they incorporate biblical teaching in their preaching and daily living. Indeed, Pentecostals believe their own perspective on the life in Christ is itself rooted in and mandated by the biblical witness. If the rise of the Charismatic movement within both Roman Catholicism and the mainstream Protestant Traditions is any indication, the entire church is undergoing a fresh appreciation for a pneumatic reading of Scripture.

The Pentecostal churches, typifying the new churches of Christendom, are intentional about facilitating an experiential encounter between believers and the Holy Spirit. Drawing on patterns evident within the Bible's testimony the new churches seek to retrieve and replicate the powerful witness of the life in Christ. In the best cases, new church leaders test experiences and teachings against the rule of Scripture. In the worst cases, some leaders break from the norms of Scripture, but for doing so these leaders are quite consistently challenged and corrected by the larger new-church culture and polity. What seems clear is that the new churches, for all of their need to learn from the wisdom of the older Christian traditions, will not be so immediately bound to traditional means of reading, interpreting and applying the Bible's message. With new cultural and philosophical contexts will come new and invigorating means of seeing what is present in the biblical text.

[30] Fee, *Listening to the Spirit*, p. 14 (emphasis in original).

29

The Bible in interfaith dialogue

S. WESLEY ARIARAJAH

It is difficult to separate the place and role of the Bible in interfaith dialogue from its role in the great missionary expansion of the church into all the regions of the world. The missionary outreach of the church was entirely bible-centred. The Bible was the source of inspiration and spiritual nourishment for the missionaries; it provided the rationale for mission and the content of the missionary message; the distribution of the Bible, or portions of it, was one of the primary methods of missionary activity, and in almost every situation the translation, printing and distribution of the Bible were foundational to the missionary enterprise.

The Reformation was instrumental in bringing the Bible to the centre of Christian life and devotion and as the primary tool of mission. However, the reformers were preoccupied with the struggle for their own survival and with clarifying their doctrinal positions in contrast to those of the Catholic Church. The initial outburst of missionary zeal itself, therefore, came as one of the significant byproducts of the Counter-Reformation. The formation of the Society of Jesus in 1556, the creation in 1622 of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome, and the establishment of a training centre for Catholic missionaries in 1627 by Pope Urban VIII began the missionary movement that would expand into the non-Christian world. From then on missionaries carried the Bible with them as the centre of their own personal spiritual life and as the primary tool of evangelisation. The Roman Catholic missions, however, would soon be allied and drawn into the imperial expansion of Spain, Portugal and France as they moved into the New World and into areas of the earth that were being discovered by European voyagers and traders.

The Protestant missionary expansion into the worlds of other faiths came much later with the rise of Pietism and Puritanism in Europe, the Great Awakening and the Evangelical Revival in North America and the Wesleyan Revival in England. Even though the missionary expansion introduced the

Bible into the non-Western world, the attitude of political, cultural and religious superiority that went with the colonial expansion was counterproductive to the emergence of interfaith dialogue. Further, the Bible was often used to justify both the missionary and colonial expansions.

Thus in tracing the role of the Bible in interfaith dialogue it is important to recognise that for centuries instead of playing a role in interfaith dialogue it was the Bible that provided the rationale for a predominantly missionary approach to peoples of other religious traditions. The inspiration for it was drawn both from the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.

It is difficult to establish any one view of other religious traditions in the Hebrew Scriptures; many conflicting views coexist. At best, there is a discernible ambivalence about other religions, and the different approaches to other religious traditions depended on the particular moment of history and the peoples with whom the Jewish community had to relate. In some passages Yahweh is elevated as the only true God and the God of all nations; all other gods were false or idols. In other places Yahweh is proclaimed as the God of the Hebrews, who had entered into a special relationship with them; the other nations worship their own gods, but the covenant people must remain faithful to the covenant. The prohibition on worshipping other gods was a matter of unfaithfulness to the covenant. When the Hebrews conquered the land of the Canaanites some of them were tempted to turn to Baal worship, which was deemed to be essential for the fertility of the land. The prophetic tradition turned against this development with strong rhetoric against idols and idol worship. Despite the many layers of views on the subject in the Hebrew Scriptures, the missionary movement drew its inspiration mainly from those passages that condemned idols and false Gods.

The Christian Scriptures of the New Testament provided even more solid grounds for an exclusivist approach to other faiths. The injunction in Matthew 28 to 'Go out and preach the gospel to all nations', the declaration in John's Gospel of Jesus as 'the way, the truth and the life', Peter's claim that there is only 'one mediator' between God and human beings etc. supplied the rationale; Paul's missionary journeys provided the model; theological claims about the uniqueness and finality of Christ gave the justification. These were accompanied by colonial power and a sense of the superiority of Christian civilisation. It is important, therefore, to recognise that a dialogical relationship between Christians and peoples of other religious traditions, as a valid relationship recognised by the church, took many centuries to emerge. For a long time the Bible was not a facilitator but a hindrance to interfaith dialogue. Those who held the Bible as the word of God had no difficulty in believing

that a missiological way of relating to peoples of other faiths was the only option open to Christians.

It should be noted, however, that some of the earliest interactions of missionaries with other religions, such as the Nestorians in China and the Syrians in India, had some of the hallmarks of interfaith dialogue. But the missionary movement from the sixteenth century would draw only an evangelistic mandate from the Bible. Some individual missionaries experimented with inculturation using some insights from the Bible, but such experiments were at the fringes of the church and had no impact on the Christian attitude and approach to other religions. An inalienable link had been drawn between the biblical message and the task of bringing the 'pagans' and 'heathens' into the church.

A historical survey of the emergence of the role of the Bible in interfaith dialogue

The initial protest of any significance over considering the non-Christian lands simply as 'mission fields' can be encountered at the first World Missionary Conference called in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1910 under the leadership of the ecumenical veteran John R. Mott. Mott, a Methodist layman from the USA, was involved in creating and supporting branches of the Student Christian Movement in universities and colleges. The movement brought together students across the denominational barriers around the study of the Bible. Having discovered the ecumenical potential of the Bible within the student movement, Mott turned to his vision of bringing missionary agencies and societies that belonged to different denominations into a World Missionary Conference so that they might pool their resources and develop common strategies in order to evangelise the world in that generation.

Little did he realise that he was also sowing the seeds for a new Christian approach to other religious traditions as early as this meeting in 1910. The Edinburgh conference worked in several commissions that dealt with different aspects of the missionary endeavour. Commission IV was given the task of exploring 'the missionary message in relation to non-Christian religions'. The commission, for its part, decided to send a large number of questionnaires to missionaries working among peoples of other religious traditions in order to understand how the biblical message is understood and experienced in concrete contexts of encountering peoples of other religions. The questions went along these lines: What are the doctrines and observances in other faiths that seem to give genuine help and consolation in their religious life? What

are the chief moral, intellectual and social hindrances to their responding to Christianity? What should be the attitude of the Christian preacher to the religion of the people among whom he works? What are the points of contact with other religious traditions, and what are the aspects of Christianity that appeal to others? And the last question, specifically addressed to Western missionaries in the field, asked whether the person's work as a Christian missionary among people of other faiths had, either in form or content, altered his or her understanding of 'what constitute the most important and vital elements in the Christian gospel'.

The leaders of Commission IV were overwhelmed by the number, length and quality of the responses received. For instance, there were over sixty responses on Hinduism alone, most of them calling for a different approach to that religious tradition. In his response F. W. Steinthal claimed that the missionary's knowledge of Hinduism should go well beyond familiarity with its history, ritual, philosophy etc. to the point of grasping, as far as one is able, the 'real life' that throbs within:

> Below the strange forms and hardly intelligible language lies life, the spiritual life of human souls, needing God, seeking God, laying hold of God as far as they have found Him. Until we have at least reached so far that under the ceremonies and doctrines we have found the religious life of the people, and at least to some extent have begun to understand this life, we do not know what Hinduism is, and are missing the essential connection with the people's religious life.[1]

J. N. Farquhar argued for a change of attitude based on the Bible and claimed that Christ's own attitude to Judaism should be the missionary's attitude to Hinduism.[2]

Based on several such responses from the field, Commission IV argued that a dialogical encounter with other religions to listen and learn should be the way forward. Even though the word 'dialogue' had not yet appeared in the ecumenical vocabulary to describe interfaith relations, the commission called for the spirit of dialogue in interreligious encounters, which not only involved an attempt to know the faith of the other but also the willingness to be challenged by the other about one's own faith. Meeting between Christianity and Hinduism, in other words, was a challenge to the still undeveloped

[1] *The Missionary Message: Report of Commission IV*, in *World Missionary Conference 1910: The History and Records of the Conference Together with Addresses Delivered at the Evening Meetings* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910), p. 172.
[2] *The Missionary Message*, p. 173.

dimensions of the Christian faith. Admitting that the mystical elements in the Christian religion had been recognised throughout the history of the church, the commission felt that the challenge of the desire for unity with God, seen in Hinduism, could never be met unless Christianity seriously explored the 'full riches of eternal life of which St John speaks as the present possession of him who believes in the son'.[3] This challenge to explore fully the nature of the inner life of the soul in God was seen as the most important impact of the Christian encounter with Hinduism:

> It may be that here there will be the richest result of it all, that whether through the Christianized mind of India or through the mind of the missionary stirred to its depths by contact with the Indian mind, we shall discover new and wonderful things in the ancient revelation which have been hidden in part from the just and faithful of the Western world.[4]

It is important to note that the dialogical view towards other religious traditions advocated by the commission was influenced by several factors. The immediate experience of some of the missionaries in the field was, of course, an important factor. But there were two other significant components at play. The first was the growing interest in the 'science of comparative religion' that was gaining ground in the universities in the early 1900s. The other was the application of higher criticism to the Bible in scholarly work. This latter reality was making it possible to set aside uncritical claims that were being made about the biblical approach to other religious traditions. The commission's report was considered the best report of the conference, 'pulsating with life in every paragraph'. Yet the overall report of the conference made very little of the work of the commission. It maintained the call for the evangelisation of the world and insisted on seeing the Bible as providing the rationale to do so.

The success of the 1910 Edinburgh meeting resulted in the decision to call such world missionary conferences on a regular basis. The second conference met in Jerusalem in 1928. The predominant concern of that period was the rise of secularism, especially in the western hemisphere. The leaders of the missionary movement saw it as a challenge to work with even greater diligence for the evangelisation of the world. There were, however, other voices which continued to challenge the missiological assumptions. Some of it came out of the rise of liberal thinking in the United States. One of the views that produced much controversy was that of W. E. Hocking, which held that

[3] *The Missionary Message*, p. 255.
[4] *The Missionary Message*, p. 256.

the universal rise of secularism required a new alignment of religious forces based on 'whatever was the true substance of religion everywhere'. Hocking used the word 'religion' in an all-embracing way to include the different systems and names, which in his view were not separate, for 'they merged in the universal human faith in the Divine Being'. There were also delegates from China and India who challenged the conference to take the values and contributions brought by the other religious traditions with the seriousness they deserved.

The strongest opposition to moving in this direction came from many European participants, represented mainly by the German delegation. They felt that the conference was moving against the teachings of the Bible. One of the German participants, Julius Richter, gave clear voice to the concern. While he saw some spiritual values in other faiths he did not agree that they could become the basis for Christian relationship to other faith communities. In his view the Christian gospel, as explicated in the Bible, called for a faith 'willing to sacrifice even the spiritual values of non-Christians'. Instead of looking for real or imagined spiritual values in other faiths, it was the duty of Christians to 'stand decidedly and even stubbornly with both feet' on the 'unique way of salvation proclaimed with one voice in the whole Bible'.[5] Another participant, G. Simmons, supporting Richter's view, put this position in a nutshell: 'The gospel is not a supplement to spiritual values in other religions, but the giving of new spiritual values to take the place of the old.'[6]

A more dialogical approach to other faiths was being advocated by those from Asia, including Nicol Macnicol, missionary to India, and Asian leaders such as Francis Wei and T. C. Chao from China, and P. Chenchiah and K. T. Paul from India. As a result the final report of the conference affirmed the spiritual values in other faiths in ways that troubled the European delegation:

> We recognize as part of one Truth that sense of the majesty of God and the consequent reverence in worship, which are conspicuous in Islam; the deep sympathy for the world's sorrow and the unselfish search for the way of escape, which are at the heart of Buddhism; the desire for contact with Ultimate Reality conceived as spiritual, which is prominent in Hinduism; the belief in a moral order of the universe and the consequent insistence on moral conduct, which is inculcated in Confucianism; the disinterested pursuit of truth and of human welfare which is often found in those who stand for secular civilization but do not accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour.[7]

[5] *The Missionary Message*, Report on speech by Julius Richter, pp. 353–6.
[6] *The Missionary Message*, Report on G. Simmons's contribution, p. 353.
[7] *The Missionary Message*, p. 491.

The German group, which felt that the biblical message was being compromised, wrote a minority report dissenting with some of the sentiments in the final report. After the conference concluded, the question whether a dialogical approach to other religions was against the teaching of the Bible became a major issue.

When the leaders of the missionary movement (which had by now been organised into the International Missionary Council) met to plan the third World Mission Conference, they realised that the question of the Bible in relation to other religious traditions must be taken up as the major issue at that conference. They decided to call upon Hendrik Kraemer, the Dutch missiologist who had been a missionary among the Muslims in Egypt and Indonesia, to write a preparatory volume for the third conference that was to be held in Tambaram, near Madras, in India in 1938. Kraemer's mandate was to spell out the biblical teaching on the Christian approach to other religious traditions.

Kraemer had been at the Jerusalem meeting and was aware of the details of the controversy. He had also been in a friendly and sympathetic relationship with Muslims in Egypt and Indonesia, and was aware of the importance of the task given to him. His preparatory volume of more than 200 pages, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, became the centrepiece of the Tambaram meeting.

Kraemer's interpretation of the Bible in relation to the approach to other religions was argued on two important concepts. He called the first, which was built on some of the basic assumptions in the theology of Karl Barth, Biblical realism. The Bible, he argued, is realistic about the human condition. Humans, as fallen creatures, are in a state of rebellion and alienation from God, and are not in a position to relate to the transcendent God by any of their own efforts. The gulf between God and human beings can never be bridged by human efforts, but only by God's own self-revelation. The Bible is the witness to the fact that God's grace, which is the only source of salvation, has been revealed in the history of Israel and finally in Jesus Christ. The only way to appropriate this salvation is by responding in faith to the challenge of the gospel message. Therefore, all religions and religious efforts from the side of human beings, however profoundly spiritual they might be, are of no salvific value. Christians are left with no alternative but to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to non-Christians, calling on them to respond to the challenge of the gospel. There is, of course, no place for arrogance or triumphalism on the part of Christians, and one has the responsibility to know what the others believe and to relate to them in a dialogical spirit, but the task of preaching the gospel to all nations can neither be denied or undermined.

The second important concept Kraemer introduced was the idea of 'discontinuity' between the gospel, as proclaimed in the Bible, and other religious traditions. All religious traditions, in Kraemer's words, are 'totalitarian systems'. By this Kraemer meant that religions are total symbol systems in which all the different concepts, beliefs, practices and values in each religion interrelate to form an internal coherence. It is not possible to isolate aspects, values or teachings from within them to seek points of contact with the gospel without doing violence to those religions and to the biblical message. There is a 'discontinuity' between all religions and the gospel message, which is again a reason why the gospel needs to be proclaimed to all.

Thus Kraemer contradicted much of openness to other religions that the Jerusalem meeting had advocated. It is clear from the correspondence among the leaders of the missionary movement that prepared the Tambaram conference that the conference was intended to put the Bible, and the mission theology drawn from it, back on the rails.[8] What was needed after Jerusalem was a clear statement on the Christian faith, a convincing reason why this faith has to supplant other religious traditions and, more especially, an adequate and biblical basis for a missionary approach to other faiths. This was what Kraemer was asked to do, and he did it admirably well. 'Kraemer was in a strong position [to do this]', says W. A. Visser't Hooft, 'For no one could accuse him of failing to study with real attention the life of other religions and civilizations. This had started in Cairo, where he lived among the Islamic theologians wearing a fez, and under the name Sheikh Kraemer. And he had continued in the same way in central Java, in Bali, among the Bataks in Sumatra and in India.'[9]

The Tambaram mission conference, and especially the role Kraemer played in it, is a crucial point in the discussions on the evolution of interfaith relations and especially the role of the Bible in interfaith dialogue. Alarmed by the changing attitude towards other religions, those who were convinced of the need to continue the world mission were making a decisive attempt to justify the need to continue the mission of converting the world to Christ. And they attempted to do so by placing the Bible at the centre of the argument.

Even though a large number of the participants at the Tambaram meeting were pleased with what Kraemer did, and the final message of the conference would tow his line, his interpretation of the Bible for mission was also challenged vehemently. Western missiologists such as H. H. Farmer and

[8] Carl F. Hallencreutz, *Kraemer towards Tambaram: A Study of Hendrik Kraemer's Missionary Approach* (Uppsala: Gleerup, 1966), pp. 253 f.

[9] W. A. Visser't Hooft, *Has the Ecumenical Movement a Future?* (Belfast: Christian Journals Ltd., 1974), pp. 58, 59.

A. G. Hogg and Asian participants such as T. C. Chao, P. Chenchiah, D. G. Moses and others challenged Kraemer's understanding of revelation, his interpretations of other religious traditions, and especially his notion of discontinuity between the gospel and other religions. The deep controversy that broke out at Tambaram and the different positions taken by the main participants were captured in one of the post-Tambaram volumes, *The Authority of the Faith*, where Kraemer wrote up his position under the title 'Continuity and Discontinuity' followed by articles by others who were in dissent with his view.[10]

What is even more significant is that in the post-Tambaram period Kraemer's interpretation of the Bible for mission to other religions became a full-blown controversy. Even though the European churches were engulfed by the outbreak of the Second World War, the 'Tambaram Controversy', as it was called, continued in other parts of the world. Does the Bible call for the conversion of adherents of all other religions to the Christian faith? Is there a biblical basis for other ways of looking at and relating to other faiths? Is there indeed a radical discontinuity between the religious life of the peoples of other faith traditions and the gospel message? An intensive debate on the role of the Bible in interfaith relations had begun.

In the meantime, the turbulence caused by the Second World War had also made an enormous impact on Christian self-understanding and the unbridled confidence in the superiority of the Christian faith over the others; missionary thinking in the late 1940s had begun to change. But more important from the perspective of Christian relations to other faiths were the developments taking place in the East. The independence of India in 1947 followed by the independence of other nations, the Communist Revolution in China, rise of nationalisms, the resurgence of religions that had been under pressure during the colonial period etc. demanded a thorough re-evaluation of the problems and prospects of mission, and more especially the Christian approach to peoples of other faiths.

Interestingly, Kraemer was among those who agreed on the need for a new discernment. As a seasoned missionary and an ecumenical theologian Kraemer was aware that the resurgence of the religious traditions of Asia and Africa and rising national sentiments would soon challenge some of the assumptions of mission and the interpretations of the Bible that supported

[10] *The World Mission of the Church: Findings and Recommendations of the Meeting of the International Missionary Council, Tambaram, Madras, December 12–29, 1938* (London and New York: IMC, 1939), vol. 1: *The Authority of the Faith*.

them. In his later writings he tried to correct some of the positions he had taken in Tambaram in order to prepare for what he called the 'coming dialogue'.[11] One of the Asian theologians, M. M. Thomas, said that 'in the post-war world, Kraemer himself had turned post-Kraemerian' and that in the search for a new way of approaching peoples of other faiths and ideologies 'a post-Kraemerian approach is emerging with Kraemer's own blessing'.[12]

When the war came to an end, the World Council of Churches, which was formed in 1948, and the International Missionary Council decided to respond to the Tambaram controversy by co-sponsoring a world-wide study process, led by study centres in different parts of the world, called 'The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men (*sic*)'. This study process led to more open advocacy for a dialogical approach to other religious traditions, both at the third assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi (1961) and at the World Mission Conference in Mexico City (1963). At the same time, the same radical changes in the world situation impelled the Roman Catholic Church to call the Second Vatican Council to revisit its teachings in the new context. One of the many subjects that drew its attention was the relationship of the church to other religious traditions. Much could be said about the discussions on the subject at the council and the documents that emerged from them. But the overall direction is captured in the papal encyclical related to Vatican II, *Ecclesiam Suam*. While affirming the uniqueness of the Christian faith and witness, the encyclical moved in the direction of affirming the values in other religious traditions and its readiness to enter into dialogue and cooperation with them: 'Indeed, honesty compels us to declare openly our conviction that there is but one true religion, the religion of Christianity . . .', said the document, 'but we do, nevertheless, recognize and respect the moral and spiritual values of the various non-Christian religions, and we desire to join with them in promoting and defending common ideas of religious liberty, human brotherhood, good culture, social welfare and civil order.' It also added: 'For our part we are ready to enter into discussion on these common ideas, and will not fail to provide every opportunity for such deep discussion, conducted with genuine mutual respect, where it will be well received.'[13]

[11] In his volumes *World Cultures and World Religions* and *Religion and Christian Faith* he modified some of his positions, even though he still believed in his concept of discontinuity.

[12] Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*, p. 94.

[13] *Ecclesiam Suam*, part III, section III. Also of interest are the Vatican II documents Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*) and Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) in Walter M. Abbot, SJ (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. and trans. Joseph Gallagher (New York: America Press, 1966), pp. 112, 662 f.

The encyclical, followed by some of the formal documents of Vatican II, opened the Catholic Church to a new relationship to peoples of other religious traditions. Both in the 'World of God and the Living Faiths of Men' studies and in the intense discussions and negotiations that produced, for instance, the Vatican II document 'Declaration of the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions', the most hotly debated subject was the Bible and what it has to say about the central beliefs of the Christian faith, and about other faiths. In all these debates and discussions there were groups that profoundly disagreed and countered the dialogical direction in which these statements were moving, based on the firm belief that the Bible supported only a missionary approach to other religious traditions.

The growing consensus within most of the mainstream churches, however, was that the historical, social and political realities in the post-colonial world demanded a significant shift in the Christian approach to other religious traditions. This resulted in an important conference on the issue in Kandy in Sri Lanka, organised by the World Council of Churches with significant participation by scholars and leaders from the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches (1967). One of the most intense and scholarly debates on the place of the Bible and its teachings in relation to peoples of other faiths took place at this meeting. However, in the end, the conference affirmed 'dialogue' as the most appropriate way to approach the other religious traditions. Developments that arose from this meeting resulted in the Uppsala assembly of the World Council of Churches (1968) affirming it and setting the stage for the formation of a programme sub-unit for Dialogue with People of Living Faith and Ideologies (1971). With the formation of the sub-unit and the creation of the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians (eventually called Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue) official dialogue with peoples of other religious traditions had became a reality. However, at almost all the major meetings of the churches on mission or on dialogue there were voices that continued to argue that the dialogical approach betrayed the mission of the church and was contrary to the teachings of the Bible.

The World Council of Churches, therefore, organised numerous workshops in different parts of the world to show that interfaith dialogue is consistent with the basic teachings in the Bible. One of the significant publications in this effort was *The Bible and People of Other Faiths*, which sought to deal with the perceived exclusive verses in the Bible and to lift up streams of thought in the Bible that supported a dialogical approach.[14] The book, which was translated

[14] S. Wesley Ariarajah, *The Bible and People of Other Faiths* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1985).

into twelve languages, provided the impetus for several other subsequent publications in different parts of the world that began to re-read the Bible for interfaith dialogue and religious plurality. Despite continuing debates over the uniqueness of Christ and the importance of Christian missions, dialogue had come to stay and the Bible began to play distinctive roles in Christian dialogue with other religious communities.

The role of the Bible in Christian–Jewish dialogue

The place of the Bible in Jewish–Christian relations has a tortured history, and again it would be a long time before it began to play a role as a positive instrument in Jewish–Christian dialogue. In its beginnings the Christian community, which was entirely made up of Jews, had inherited the Hebrew Scriptures as part of its heritage. However, as the church began to take a predominantly Gentile character, and especially as the canon of Christian Scriptures began to emerge, the status of the Hebrew Scriptures within the church became an issue. The Marcionite controversy is witness to the reality that there were indeed voices within the church that had questioned the continued relevance of what was by then considered the 'Old Testament' for the church, and throughout the church's history the nature of the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures for the church has remained a debated issue.

But a more significant question for the history of the role of the Bible in Jewish–Christian dialogue relates to biblical hermeneutics. Several writers of the books of the New Testament had a supersessionist reading of the Old Testament which argued that Jesus was the fulfilment of the promises in the Hebrew Scriptures. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews, for instance, argued that the earlier covenant made with Moses had been superseded. He further maintained that almost all the religious institutions of the Jewish people, such as the Torah, the Temple, the sacrificial system etc., had been replaced by Jesus and what he had accomplished on the cross. Some of the early polemics between the Jewish community and the Jewish–Christian community that was gradually separating itself into a distinct religious unit were reflected in the writings in the New Testament. John's Gospel uses the generic term 'Jews' to depict the confrontations between Jesus and the religious authorities of his time.

Soon the prejudices that are discernible in the New Testament became part of the history of Jewish–Christian relations. The biblical accounts of the Passion of Christ were gradually presented in ways that incited anti-Jewish, anti-Judaistic sentiments. Even though in the initial stages both Jews and

Christians were persecuted by the Roman empire, once Christianity became the empire's official religion the Jews came under enormous pressure, and a particular reading of the Bible and its teachings was liberally used to justify their suppression. Again, the use of the Bible to insist that the Messiah awaited by the Jewish people had already come in Jesus Christ undermined one of the foundational streams of belief within the Jewish community.

In this context, although a complex set of reasons and circumstances led to the persecution of the Jews and the Holocaust, the Jewish community placed the Christian reading of the Bible as one of the main contributing factors for the hatred of the Jews, anti-Semitism and the eventual attempt by the Nazi regime to perpetrate genocide.

After the end of the Second World War, when the Christian community began the difficult task of rebuilding its relationship with the Jewish community, the Bible and its interpretation, especially the anti-Semitic and anti-Judaic passages in the New Testament, were seen as a major hindrance to a dialogical relationship between Jews and Christians. In fact, the different ways in which the Bible was owned and interpreted caused a major problem for Jewish–Christian dialogue. Therefore, Christian scholars who were committed to such dialogue began a prolonged and arduous task of re-reading the Bible for the new context. New hermeneutical principles and tools were developed to interpret the Bible in ways that did not deny the reality and validity of the continuing Jewish community and Judaism. New studies were done on the Hebrew Bible in its relationship to rabbinic Judaism. The Jewishness of Jesus and his teachings, the importance of reading his encounters with Jewish leaders within the Jewish context of his time, revisiting such concepts as covenant, making Christians aware of the significance of rabbinic Judaism etc. became the projects of both Christians and Jewish scholars.

In other words, it was important to rehabilitate the Bible in a new way within Jewish–Christian relations before it could have any meaningful role in Jewish–Christian dialogue. Much work has been done on this issue by both Christian and Jewish scholars, and there is greater willingness today to see a significant role for the Bible in Jewish–Christian dialogue, witnessed to by joint Jewish–Christian Bible-study groups.[15] However, Christians in many parts of the world who are not in direct contact with Jewish communities and are unaware of the issues continue to read the Bible and preach on it in ways

[15] The following may be consulted: Swidler et al., *Bursting of Bonds?*; Goldenberg, *The Nations that Know thee Not*; Zannoni, *Introduction to Jewish–Christian Relations*; Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible*; Greeley and Neusner, *The Bible and Us*; Efroymson et al., *Within Context*.

that offend the Jewish community. Thus, although the Bible has begun to play a role in Jewish–Christian dialogue, especially in Europe and North America, there are issues and problems that need continued attention.

The Bible in Muslim–Christian dialogue

The Bible itself has been the subject of many Muslim–Christian dialogue events. The Muslims look upon the Christians and the Jews as the 'People of the Book' and recognise that the Scriptures of the three communities share many stories in common. At first sight it would appear that the common scriptural heritage shared by the three communities would facilitate greater dialogue among what are commonly referred to as the three Abrahamic faiths. In reality, however, the three communities are deeply divided over their understanding of the nature and authority of their respective Scriptures and on how to interpret them. Therefore this very issue has been a main preoccupation of Christian–Muslim as well as Jewish–Christian–Muslim dialogues.

To begin with, Muslims hold that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures are revelations from God made through a series of prophets from Adam until Jesus, but that both, in their present form, are corruptions of these revelations. God had, therefore, chosen to reveal God's will for the final time through the Prophet Muhammad in the Qur'an. It holds further that in order that humans may not corrupt God's revelation any more the Qur'an was given to the prophet directly, word for word, by the angel Gabriel. Thus while all three traditions hold their Scriptures as the Word of God, Muslims go further to claim that the Qur'an in fact carries the *words* of God. The Islamic reservations about the Torah and the Christian Bible can only be understood on the basis of the beliefs that Muslims hold about the Qur'an. Muslims believe that God revealed God's will to Moses in the five books of Moses, the Psalms to King David, and the gospel to Jesus. But when they actually read the Hebrew Scriptures they find books that do not relate to the revelations to Moses, that the Psalms are in fact praise and prayers directed to God by human beings and that the Christian Scriptures carry letters and writings by Paul and others. These are in sharp contrast to the Qur'an, which from the beginning to the end is God revealing God's will to the Prophet. The natural conclusion that is drawn is that the Jews and Christians altered, added and corrupted the original revelations to Moses, David and Jesus, making necessary a new revelation.

Contemporary dialogues between Christians, Muslims and Jews have helped all parties to recognise the different senses in which the Bible and the Qur'an are called the word of God. Muslims have begun to understand that

the Jews, while firmly believing that God revealed God's will to Moses, look at the Bible as the word of God in a more general sense, and insist that it has to be thoroughly studied and interpreted through the generations to extract its meaning for different contexts. Muslim–Christian dialogue has also helped Muslims to understand that Christians look at Jesus himself as the revelation, and speak of the Bible as the revealed word of God in yet another sense. These dialogues have also helped Christians and Jews to have greater appreciation of the Islamic approach to the Qur'an and how it shaped Islamic beliefs and practices. In other words, the Bible itself has been the subject of dialogue, and it has been the vehicle to deal with other more difficult issues in Christian–Muslim relations such as the meaning of the Christian claim that Jesus is the Son of God and the doctrine of the trinity.[16]

Christian–Muslim dialogue on the Bible, at least at the scholarly level, has moved the discussion away from the controversies over the meaning of revelation to the spiritual significance that the Bible and the Qur'an hold for each of the religious communities and the ways in which each community can be enriched by reading and reflecting on one another's Scriptures.

Christian study centres in places such as India, Pakistan, Lebanon, the United Kingdom etc. and Islamic studies institutes such as that at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut in the USA have been engaging Christians and Muslims in dialogue on this issue. The World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Interfaith Dialogue have also had several dialogue encounters where the nature and authority of the respective Scriptures and the related doctrinal and social issues have been the subjects of discussion. However, today there are also new and more visible events where Christians and Muslims study their Scriptures together. For instance, recently, Reverend Michael Ipgrave, on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury, organised a pioneering Christian–Muslim seminar at Doha that was hosted by the Emir of Qatar. The volume *Scriptures in Dialogue*[17] that presents the proceedings contains for the most part the work carried out by four parallel small groups of Christian and Muslim scholars that met on six occasions for intensive study of paired passages from the Qur'an and the Bible. Today small groups of Christians and Muslims meet in various parts of the world to study the Bible and the Qur'an together. As early as mid-1980 Father Jacques Jomier published helpful materials for such groups. Also

[16] For this section of the report I am indebted to Christian W. Troll, 'The Bible and the Qur'an in Dialogue', *Bulletin Dei Verbum* (1979/80), pp. 31–8.

[17] Ipgrave (ed.), *Scriptures in Dialogue*. For other accounts of Christian–Muslim dialogue see Watt, *Muslim–Christian Encounters*; Muslim–Christian Research Group, *The Challenge of Scriptures*; al-Faruqi, *Trialogue of Abrahamic Faiths*.

of interest is the long-term project of the Muslim–Christian Research Group (Groupe de recherches islamo-chrétien) where Christian and Muslim scholars from Europe and North America meet on a regular basis in a number of local groups for research and discussion. The fruits of their encounters were published in French and English in 1987 and 1989 respectively.

The Bible in dialogical encounters with African and Asian religions

As seen above, the shared biblical heritage of the three Abrahamic religions has been both a blessing and a problem in Jewish–Christian–Islamic dialogues. In the absence of this heritage, the Bible plays an entirely different role in Christian encounters with the religious traditions of Africa and Asia. The earliest attempts to interpret the Bible in Africa can be traced back to the patristic period and to persons such as Origen and Clement of Alexandria. The Bible came to sub-Saharan Africa mainly with the missionary movement, with a purely missiological reading of the Bible as discussed earlier. Generally speaking, the place of the Bible in Christian encounters with the religions and cultures of the Third World is very complex and was distorted by the coming of Christianity to these regions with colonial powers. In his book *The Bible and the Third World* R. S. Sugirtharajah gives a well-researched account of the role the Bible has played in these three phases of its encounters within the Third World.

Limiting our discussion to the area of dialogue, one would note that a dialogical encounter between the gospel and African religious and cultural traditions had been initiated by some of the individual missionaries who saw the need to relate the gospel to the African cultures. However, substantial discussions on the place and role for the Bible and its message within African religions and cultures began after the independence of the African countries from colonial rule and the rise of African biblical scholars and theologians who began to relate the Bible and its teachings to their religious and cultural heritages.

Even though there had been some attempts to hold organised dialogues between Christians and persons practising African traditional religions, much of the 'dialogue' in the African context has been very different from Christian–Jewish and Christian–Muslim dialogues. In Africa the place of the Bible in dialogue has to be seen primarily in terms of Christians entering into an 'inner dialogue' with the religious and cultural traditions to which they belonged at the time they accepted the Christian faith which was still an inalienable part of

their own selfhood and the environment in which they lived. In other words, Christians do not have partners in dialogue, but seek to engage their faith with their cultural heritage. Therefore biblical hermeneutics has been at the heart of the role that the Bible plays in the dialogue with African religio-cultural traditions.

A volume published under the title *The Bible in Africa*, jointly edited by Gerald West and Musa Dube, carries a number of articles by contemporary African scholars on the role Bible has played in re-shaping Christian spiritual and theological traditions in its encounter with African spiritual heritage. In his article in this volume, Justin Ukpong highlights different ways in which African biblical hermeneutics is shaping Christian encounters with African religious and cultural heritages. To begin with, African biblical scholars have highlighted the presence of Africa in the Bible, and have corrected some of the negative ways in which early Western scholarship has interpreted the texts related to it. Then they seek to go beyond studying similarities and dissimilarities between African religions and the Bible to facilitate the encounter between the biblical message and African culture, and to evolve a new understanding of Christianity that would be both African and biblical. This also involves the reading of the Bible against the background of African culture, religion and life experience with the aim of arriving at a new understanding of the biblical text that would be informed by the African context.[18] At the same time the Bible and its message is also interpreted to critique social issues as Christians look at their own cultural tradition with new eyes.

The patriarchal narratives and the Exodus narrative, as well as the wisdom literature in the Bible, especially Psalms and Proverbs, resonate well with African culture, making the Bible, in the local languages, a very accessible book. The interpretations of Jesus as Chief, Ancestor, Liberator and Healer have also made inroads in reaching into the cultural traditions of Africa.

In contrast to this, in the Christian–Hindu, Christian–Buddhist and Christian–Taoist/Confucian dialogues it is the New Testament, especially the presentations of Jesus in the Gospel narratives, that has played a significant role. The Old Testament, with its wars, animal sacrifices, the concept of a chosen people etc., has been the difficult part of the Bible for the Buddhists to digest, but the figure of Jesus and what the Synoptic Gospels present as the emphases of Jesus' teachings have been an important part of Buddhist–Christian dialogues. There is a lively debate among scholars as to the influence the teachings of Buddha may have had in first-century Palestine, especially in

[18] See Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*; Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*.

view of the active spice trade at that time between the western coast of India and the Middle East. There had been Jewish settlements in the south-western coast of India, known as Malabar (in the present state of Kerala), at that time; a strong oral tradition holds that the apostle St Thomas had fled persecution to the Malabar coast in 52 CE and was the source of the churches of the Syrian traditions that are well established in the area to the present day. Even though the tradition that St Thomas was in India has not been established as a historical fact, there is indisputable evidence that the church of the Syrian tradition was in Malabar from at least about 200 CE. What is important, however, about this tradition for this discussion is that there could equally have been a reverse process, and that Buddhist thinking could easily have influenced a few of the first-century movements in Palestine. In any case, some of the major themes of Jesus' teaching, such as self-denial, dying to one's self, rejection of wealth and power, compassion for all people, equal dignity of all persons, giving of oneself for the benefit of others, self-emptying etc., resonate well with Buddhism and have facilitated Buddhists' approach to the Bible.

There, are of course, many other beliefs in the Bible that present problems for Buddhists. But several Buddhist–Christian dialogue centres and Buddhist–Christian dialogue programmes based in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Hong Kong, Japan, Europe and the United States have helped Buddhists and Christians to study their Scriptures and the teachings that emanate from them, and to go deeper into the teachings of Buddha and Jesus as represented in the Bible and the Buddhist Scriptures. The image of Jesus presented in the Gospels has been of interest to Japanese Zen scholars who see the concept of *sunyatta* or nothingness as very close to the biblical concept of *kenosis* or self-emptying. In 2001 Perry Schmidt-Leukel, Thomas Josef Götz and Gerhard Köberlin published the papers of the third conference of the European Network of Buddhist–Christian Studies entitled *Buddhist Perceptions of Jesus* in which Buddhist scholars from different countries of Asia and different schools of Buddhist thought give an account of how they perceive Jesus as presented in the biblical accounts.[19] In the Christian–Taoist/Confucian dialogues the interpretation of Jesus in the Gospel of John as the 'Word' that was 'in the beginning' plays a significant role, for the Taoists see a close resemblance between the Logos and the Tao.

While in Buddhist/Taoist–Christian dialogue the primary emphasis has been in interpreting the Jesus presented in the Gospel narratives into Asian

[19] Schmidt-Leukel et al. (eds.), *Buddhist Perceptions of Jesus*. See also Yagi and Swidler, *A Bridge to Buddhist–Christian Dialogue*.

religious categories of thought, in Hindu–Christian dialogue the actual Gospel narratives on Jesus and his teachings take centre stage. Here the actual text of the New Testament, especially the Gospel narratives, has been of interest to Hindus. In looking at the role of the Bible in Hindu–Christian dialogue, one needs to make a distinction between the dialogue that the Hindus have had with the Bible by themselves and the role it plays in actual Hindu–Christian dialogues. In a volume entitled *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* M. M. Thomas mentions many Hindus who have been influenced by the biblical accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus, which have also been the source of some of the reform movements within Hinduism. Gandhi, more than any other, represents the moves within Hinduism to engage in their own dialogue with the Bible. He was so influenced by the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' teachings on self-denial, rejection of wealth and power, the uncompromising insistence on overcoming evil with good, non-violence and commitment to the truth etc. that he fashioned his own Christology and developed a non-violent resistance movement against British rule 'with the New Testament in one hand, and the Bhagavad Gita in the other'.[20] The Hindu–Christian engagement with the Bible has helped Christians to draw some of the Asian Christological images of Jesus[21] as *Guru* (teacher who leads one to the truth), *Sanyasin* (renouncer), *Satyagrahin* (one who chooses non-violence as an instrument of struggle), *Avatar* (one who takes human form to save others), *Jivanmukta* (liberated soul), mystic etc., all of which were there to be drawn from within the Bible, but were discovered and lifted up in the context of Christian dialogue with Hinduism.

It is interesting that the Bible does not have one particular role in interfaith dialogues; its role has been determined by the way it has been used and its message has been interpreted by successive generations of Christians and the Christian political powers to determine their relationship to peoples of other religious traditions. Its message had been used in much of past Christian history to exclude, divide and dominate. Today, in the context of interfaith dialogue, the same Bible is helping us to rebuild relationships on the basis of mutual respect and acceptance. Much more, however, needs to be done within the Christian tradition to re-own the Bible in a new way in a religiously plural world.

[20] See Ellsberg (ed.), *Gandhi on Christianity*.
[21] Amaladoss, *The Asian Jesus*.

PART V

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THEMATIC OVERVIEW: RECEPTION AND USE OF THE BIBLE, 1750–2000

30

The Bible in society

WILLARD M. SWARTLEY

Throughout the modern period (1750–2000) the Bible's role in society has been substantial. Stephen Neill identified two periods when the Bible in the West shaped society into a 'near synthesis' between the Bible and British culture: the last half of the reign of Elizabeth I in the sixteenth century with its rapid diffusion of English Bibles and the Victorian age with the impact of the Evangelical Revival.[1]

The latter period witnessed the rise of the Sunday school in England (Robert Raikes, 1780, in Gloucester) and North America, imparting biblical knowledge – and fostering literacy in its early years – to many Protestants for two centuries. The church began elementary schools, teaching first the ABCs and then reading the New Testament. In America, Sunday school functioned as a platform to advocate for prohibition, leading to the USA constitutional amendment on prohibition in the early twentieth century. Sunday school and other Bible-study groups continue to shape people and society.

Most denominations began schools of higher education during this period, first in Western countries, then worldwide in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in conjunction with their missionary vision. Denominations began Bible colleges to empower Christian commitment and spiritual discipline. The Bible's influence was foundational: in developing Christian character, in promoting believers' striving for a holy life, and in protecting them from the world. As a massive study has shown,[2] however, most such institutions gradually accommodated to the dominant culture to varying degrees.

[1] Stephen Neill, *The Unfinished Task* (Edinburgh: House Press, 1957), pp. 98–102.

[2] James Tunstead Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998). The study presents the history and trend away from the church of two colleges each for Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists and Evangelicals; and three for Baptists, Lutherans and Catholics.

The Bible inspired the Great Awakening in England and the USA (George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards). Pietism (begun in the seventeenth century) continued its influence in Germany, the Netherlands and America. The Second Great Awakening in the United States (mid-1800s) birthed an evangelicalism that spawned numerous social reforms[3] and zeal for missions which, closely linked with the sending nation and its culture,[4] promulgated a synthesis of the gospel with Western culture. The main features of the phenomenal spread of revivalism and social reform in the 1850s were noonday prayer meetings, with periods of fasting, evangelistic preaching and the quest for holiness. The YMCA and the Sunday School Union aided the movement. Bible teaching permeated the whole as its underpinning. Great preachers and writers, Charles Finney, John Wesley, Dwight Moody, Reuben Torrey, Phoebe Palmer and even the liberal Horace Bushnell, contributed to personal transformation (sanctification and the outpouring of the Spirit in some instances) that also included elements of social reform.[5] Methodists, Quakers, Puritan heirs, Baptists and other traditions spurred the movement. Revivalism continued in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example Billy Sunday (with prohibition emphases). Billy Graham's worldwide evangelistic campaigns spanned fifty years.

Spurred by Scripture, Bible societies, mission agencies, relief agencies and philanthropic societies sprang up: 158 between 1790 and 1837 in the United States alone, almost all after 1810.[6] A similar flowering of organisations began in Britain and western European countries. While the British SPCK began before 1750, many others began in the period 1770–90, and again in 1820–50. The Red Cross began in the 1850s. The Presbyterian (US) Near East Relief began in 1915 to help Armenians in Turkey and Syria. Both the American Friends Service Committee (1917) and the Mennonite Central Committee (1920) began in response to First World War needs.[7]

The Bible gave rise to missionary and ecumenical movements (Edinburgh, 1910). Each of the World Council of Churches (WCC) meetings during the

[3] See Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*.

[4] This issue has dogged Western missionary efforts throughout this period, with limited critical reflection. See Wilbert R. Shenk, 'The Missionary and Politics: Henry Venn's Contributions', *JCS* 24:3 (1982), pp. 525–33 and Wilbert R. Shenk, 'Mission and Politics in the Nineteenth Century: Pieter Jansz' Tract on Dutch Colonial Policy', *MQR* 54:2 (1980), pp. 83–105.

[5] Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*, pp. 63–113.

[6] C. I. Foster, *An Errand of Mercy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960).

[7] Information on relief agencies from John A. Lapp, former executive of the Mennonite Central Committee.

twentieth century was keynoted by some biblical motif, for example in 1954, Evanston, Illinois: 'Jesus Christ, the Hope of the World'. The missionary, constrained by Christ's love, translated the Bible into the people's language. Translation was and is a precious gift to the indigenes.[8] The Bible in the vernacular inspired 'indigenous confidence at a time when colonialism was demanding paternal overlordship. . . . African Christian leaders grasped the political significance of its vernacular premise . . . point[ing] unmistakably toward local ascendancy in an African pastorate . . . rather than the refined elaborations of a missionary strategy.'[9] Thus local leadership could decide against the instruction of the missionaries, as illustrated by an indigenous set of 'Ten Commandments' by the Akurinu churches in Kenya.[10] Indigenous church movements sprang up throughout Africa, some with stunning numerical growth, such as the prophet William Wadé Harris, whose preaching over two years brought 120,000 adult West Africans to the Christian faith.[11] In Latin America base communities' Bible study brought new life and growth as well.[12]

During this period many new religious movements arose, from Seventh Day Adventism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Salvation Army, Vineyard Churches and Jesus People in United States to the Kimbanguist, Harrist, and Akurinu African Instituted groups. Worldwide, this number spirals into the hundreds, with some relatively short-lived, but many expanding and changing the ethos of the Christian church worldwide.

Pentecostalism (with revivalist beginnings in Topeka, Kansas, 1901 and then the famed Azusa Street revival, 1906) witnesses to powerful Spirit use of Scripture. This Scripture–Spirit power grew rapidly in the USA South and Midwest and has produced major growth worldwide, contributing significantly to a sea change in global Christianity. In 1800 the Christian world population was 86 per cent Western and white; by 1980 the ratio between Western and non-Western was 50–50; by 1990 it was Western 40 per cent and non-Western 60 per cent, largely in the global South.[13]

[8] Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, p. 245.
[9] Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, pp. 138–9.
[10] Nahashon W. Ndung'u, 'The Role of the Bible in the Rise of African Instituted Churches: The Case of the Akurinu Churches in Kenya', in Sugirtharajah (ed.), *Voices from the Margin*, pp. 484–93. See here the helpful article by Peter Nyende, 'Institutional and Popular Interpretations of the Bible in Africa: Towards an Integration', *ExpT* 119:2 (2007), pp. 59–66.
[11] Kwame Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History and Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), p. 85.
[12] See e.g. Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname* and the chapters by Mesters (Brazil) and Kalilombe (Malawi) in Sugirtharajah (ed.), *Voices from the Margin*, pp. 431–53.
[13] See Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 5–7, 178, 185–93.

In 1936 Marion Simms published *The Bible in America*, identifying and describing various foreign-language Bibles brought to America by immigrants and the many Bible translations made in America, with the first into Algonquin by the missionary John Eliot, completed in 1658, published in 1663. From 1750 to 2000 the number of translations spiralled in both Native American languages and English. Simms devotes his final lengthy chapter to 'the influence of the Bible on national life and institutions'. A sub-heading in the last chapter, 'The State and Government', is: 'America a Christian Nation?' To make the case, Simms asserts, 'The Bible moulded the life, customs, and laws of the colonists as no other influence did.' He says the United States Declaration of Independence manifests Christian tenets: its appeal to the 'Supreme Judge' and its recognition of the 'protection of divine Providence'. Also, the 'Constitution of United States is a Christian document', in that bills of Congress must be approved by the president within ten days, 'Sundays excepted'. Simms recognises that many of the young nation's leaders were 'free-thinkers', but most people adhered to Christian piety and practices.[14]

This Christian ethos among the western European colonists was shaped to varying degrees by the Bible. Thomas Cahill has noted that without the Jewish legacy

> we would never have known the abolitionist movement, the prison-reform movement, the antiwar movement, the labor movement, the civil rights movement, the movements of indigenous and dispossessed peoples for their human rights, the antiapartheid movement in South Africa, the Solidarity movement in Poland, the free-speech and pro-democracy movements in such Far Eastern countries as South Korea, the Philippines, and even China.[15]

Indeed, the United States cannot be regarded a Christian nation without acknowledging Christianity's great debt to Judaism, the moral cradle of Christianity. These great social and national movements, empowered by Judaeo-Christian moral convictions, however, were contradicted by Western countries' treatment of Jews (especially Germany under Nazism) and America's shameful treatment of indigenes – the colonial story is replete with mass killing of indigenes[16] – and slavery commerce. During the last half-century United

[14] P. Marion Simms, 'The Influence of the Bible on National Life and Institutions', in *The Bible in America* (New York: Wilson-Erickson, 1936), pp. 000–00 at pp. 309–10. Simms cites an 1892 US Supreme Court decision that 'formally declared the United States to be a Christian nation' (Holy Trinity Church vs United States 143 U.S. 471), p. 311.

[15] Thomas Cahill, *The Gifts of the Jews: How a Tribe of Desert Nomads Changed the Way Everyone Thinks and Feels* (New York et al.: Doubleday, 1998), p. 248.

[16] For the lamentable stories see Dee Alexander Brown, *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971).

States' imperial politics supported many dictators in poor, developing nations, and fomented wars by its imperialist domination. The Bible's influence in society during this last quarter millennium is thus a chequered story, often claimed and simultaneously denied by its claimants' actions.

Nonetheless, the Bible's influence erupted in richly diverse ways: in the evangelistic / revivalist leaders John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards, forerunners of this period, and in this period: Theodore Dwight Weld, Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday, Billy Graham, Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu and Mother Teresa. To these Cahill adds: 'Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Mother Jones, Mahatma Gandhi, Cesar Chavez, Helder Camara, Oscar Romero, Rigoberta Menchú, Corazon Aquino, Nelson Mandela, Charity Kaluki Ngilu, Harry Wu' – all empowered by the Bible for their moral vision.[17]

Indeed, the Bible empowered Martin Luther King in his preaching against racism, Bishop Tutu and Nelson Mandela in dismantling apartheid in South Africa, and other preacher-teachers and writers decrying violence and societal injustices (e.g. Karl Barth, Abraham Heschel, Jim Wallis, Ron Sider). Reinhold Niebuhr and John Howard Yoder loom large in Christian thinking about Scripture's and the church's influence in politics. Richard Bauckham and Alan Storkey's contributions are helpful, with Bauckham addressing political use of the Bible and Storkey the political significance of Jesus (echoing John Howard Yoder's *Politics of Jesus*).[18]

In an erudite 2005 lecture at Wheaton College, Mark Noll details the influence of 'The Bible in American Public Life, 1860–2005'.[19] Noll identifies four types of usage: rhetorical, evocative, political and theological. Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King both used *rhetorical* echoes of the Bible as well as *evocative* lines in their public persuasive speeches. King's memorable 'Dream' speech deploys the Bible *politically*, in quoting Isaiah 40:4. Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address demonstrates *theological* use of the Bible, placing the course of the war into the judgement of God. Noll's analysis of Lincoln raises an issue applicable to this entire chapter: in what ways do we recognise God's judgement in historical events?[20]

[17] Cahill, *The Gifts of the Jews*, pp. 248–9.

[18] Richard J. Bauckham, *The Bible in Politics: How to Read the Bible Politically* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1989); Storkey, *Jesus and Politics*; Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*. Walter Wink's numerous writings on the 'powers' also aid understanding of the Bible's political significance.

[19] Noll, 'The Bible in American Public Life'.

[20] Keillor, *God's Judgments*, has taken up this theme in regard to other events in American history, such as on 9/11 and the burning of Washington in 1814. He asks: is Lincoln's perception of God's judgements incomprehensible to us today?

Noll describes four other minority-group voices that also claimed a strong sense of the Bible's domain over their communities, apart from USA identity. To these I add the quiescent Amish and Mennonite communities sprinkled throughout USA.

The slavery debate

Of all the moral issues facing Western society during this quarter-millennium, none used Scripture more passionately, from opposing sides, than the slavery debate stretching from 1820 to 1865, with echoes of the same in South Africa regarding apartheid a century later. Slave trade legally ended in Britain in 1807, though owning slaves continued in Britain until 1833 (and in British colonies until 1834). An engaging account of the abolition movement in Britain is Adam Hochschild's *Bury the Chains*. The narrative begins with John Newton's entry into slave-trade trafficking at an early age. The slave trade is exposed for all its hellish horrors.[21] Hochschild interweaves the contribution of numerous leaders of the abolition movement, notably Thomas Clarkson (morally awakened by his 1785 first-prize-winning Latin essay at Cambridge University), Granville Sharp (already a strong voice for abolition), numerous Quakers, Reverend James Ramsey, and then William Wilberforce and William Pitt, Jr. (the latter two in Parliament, strategically placed to move the growing religious sentiment into the political arena). Famous pottery designer Josiah Wedgwood, a Quaker industrialist, advanced the cause with his wax-stamp seal to close envelopes, depicting a kneeling African with uplifted hands pleading, 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother?' Thirty-four years after retiring from the slave trade, in January 1788 John Newton, now preacher, wrote his story 'Amazing Grace', exposing the evils of the slave trade.[22] The contributions of African slaves Olaudah Equiano and Quobna Ottobah Cugoano – who both gained freedom – also proved significant, especially Cugoano's 1788 book exposing 'the evil and wicked traffick of slavery and the commerce of the human species'.[23] William Wilberforce's key contribution is now popularised in book[24] and film. From Clarkson's essay through all these contributions the Bible functioned as catalyst to slavery's abolition, though other humanitarian, philosophical and economic factors influenced this historic societal change as well.

[21] Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, pp. 11–29.
[22] Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, pp. 89–131.
[23] Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, pp. 30–40, 135–6.
[24] Piper, *Amazing Grace*, pp. 19, 35–40. See also Stephen Tomkins, *William Wilberforce: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007) and Eric Metaxas,

John Barclay masterfully narrates the pro- and anti-slavery debate in Britain. He describes the limits and novel elements of the Bible's use, especially by the abolitionists, with Quaker and Evangelical voices, including John Wesley. He points also to some differences in the scope of societal considerations between the British and United States debates. In both debates abolitionists relied on broader moral vision within the biblical narratives. He sums up his excellent contribution:

> What, then, was the crucial hermeneutical move in the late eighteenth century that enabled a new reading of the Bible and slavery? There was, in fact, no new exegetical advance in the interpretation of the biblical texts on slavery; there were no breakthroughs in linguistic or historical approaches to these texts, no fresh discoveries about slavery in the history of Israel or the life of the early church. What changed was the classification of the slave, and therefore, on that basis, the applicability of the biblical text: as slaves were reframed, redescribed and re-presented as 'brothers' and 'men', so they could be found in the love-commandment, the parable of the Good Samaritan, the parable of the sheep and the goats, and elsewhere, whatever might be said in texts more explicitly concerned with slaves and slavery. This is not quite a bypassing of explicit texts, in order to appeal to the more abstract 'principles' of the Bible. This is rather a refusal to let slaves remain locked within the texts that speak about slaves, and to let them roam, as agents and as objects, across the whole biblical canon, under the labels 'brother'/'sister' and 'man'/'woman', not under the label 'slave'. It is this act of hermeneutical liberation (born of both religious and philosophical change) that turned out to be most significant for social reform – liberation from the very category 'slave'.[25]

Forty years after the debates began in England, biblical debates over slavery raged in the United States – until the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 (five years later slaves were freed). Both sides in the slavery debate appealed vigorously to the Bible.[26] To sample this debate, hear one of the five theses arguing the pro-slavery position:

> Thesis 3: *Slavery was recognized and approved by Jesus Christ and the apostles*.
>
> Jesus and the apostles saw the cruel slavery practices of the Roman empire but never said one word against them. The apostles, who represent Jesus Christ, fully agree with Jesus, even appealing to his words on this subject (1 Tim. 6:1–6). As Governor Hammond of South Carolina put it:

Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007).

[25] Barclay, 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother?'.

[26] Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*, pp. 31–64.

> It is vain to look to Christ or any of his Apostles to justify such blasphemous perversions of the word of God. Although Slavery in its most revolting form was everywhere visible around them, no visionary notions of piety or philanthropy ever tempted them to gainsay the LAW even to mitigate the cruel severity of the existing system. On the contrary, regarding Slavery as an established, as well as an inevitable human condition of human society, they never hinted at such a thing as its termination on earth, any more than that 'the poor may cease out of the land', which God affirms to Moses shall never be.
>
> It is impossible, therefore, to suppose that Slavery is contrary to the will of God. It is equally absurd to say that American slavery differs in form or principle from that of the chosen people. We accept the Bible terms as the definition of our Slavery, and its precepts as the guide of our conduct.[27]

Anti-slavery proponents argued more on moral principles. The prophets condemned oppression, and therefore oppressive slavery did and could not exist in Israel. Thus slavery in the Bible (i.e. the Old Testament or Hebrew culture) was not like slavery practice in the south (1820–60). Differences in slavery practices were significant, however – for example, in the time slaves had off and the cities of refuge. In Israel slaves had off twenty-three years within a fifty-year (jubilee) cycle. Not so in the American South!![28] Anti-slavery writer George Bourne put it bluntly: 'Yet multitudes of pro-slavery Christians at the present time contend that these oppressive practices, which overthrew and destroyed ancient Israel, are strong evidence that God sanctions the most oppressive practice in the world!!!'[29]

Another important perspective to the exegetical and hermeneutical debates over slavery was the African American (Negro) spirituals' use of the Bible, empowering slaves to survive oppression. In these soul expressions, salvation means freedom. Frederick Douglass said of these spirituals, 'They were tones, loud, long, and deep, breathing the prayer and complaint of souls boiling over with bitterest anguish. Every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains.'[30] The judgement day would come; the

[27] 'Hammond's Letters on Slavery', in *Pro-slavery Arguments: Several Essays* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968 [1852]), pp. 107–8, quoted in Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*, pp. 34–5.

[28] Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*, pp. 42–3.

[29] George Bourne, *A Condensed Antislavery Bible Argument: By a Citizen of Virginia* (New York: S. W. Benedict, 1845), p. 51, quoted in Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*, p. 43.

[30] John Lovell, Jr., 'The Social Implications of the Negro Spiritual', *Journal of Negro Education* 18 (October 1929), pp. 634–43, quoted at pp. 640–1 and in Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*, p. 57.

Satan of slavery would be banished; the oppressed would be set free. American ex-slave William Wells Brown echoes Quaker Josiah Wedgwood's plea:

> Am I not a man and a brother?
> Ought I not then to be free?
> Sell me not one to another
> Take not thus my liberty.
> Christ, our Saviour
> Died for me, as well as for thee.[31]

Yes, freedom came in 1858, but the struggle for equality continues. African American use of the Bible continues to empower, in black liberation theology. 'Exodus' and 'promised land' are cardinal themes, but the 'promised land' disappoints. Instead, the 'wilderness wanderings' more accurately represent black experience in this ongoing struggle to be truly free. Shelby Rooks, cited by Theophus Smith and Demetrius Williams successively, has questioned the appropriateness of the 'wilderness' motif, since it implies that the 'promised land' is yet to come, a hope that has become illusion. Rooks thus suggests that the continuing struggle of blacks in America is represented better by Israel's 'exile'.[32]

The voices of black women, however, struck still another note, for their status and role within black culture continued to be more like 'stuck in Egypt', still making bricks. Delores Williams, Renita Weems and other womanist voices protest against biblical images of freedom, since for them it had not yet come even within black culture.[33]

Demetrius Williams helpfully surveys this African American appeal to biblical imagery, and proposes Galatians 3:28, observing its limitations as well, as the best hope for uniting black men and women in the freedom and equality that all long for. The new 'in Christ' reality is not confined to spiritual standing before God, but Paul and all Christ's followers claim new creation, freedom and equality within social, cultural structures.[34]

[31] Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*, p. 58.

[32] C. Shelby Rooks, 'Toward the Promised Land: An Analysis of the Religious Experience of Black America', *The Black Church* 2:1 (1972), pp. 1–48; Smith, *Conjuring Culture*. For perceptive analysis of the various scholarly black theological uses of Scripture see Brown, *Blackening of the Bible*.

[33] Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); Renita J. Weems, 'Reading her Way through the Struggle: African Women and the Bible', in Felder (ed.), *Stony the Road we Trod*, pp. 57–77.

[34] Demetrius Williams, 'The Bible and Models of Liberation in the African American Experience', in Bailey (ed.), *Yet with a Steady Beat*, pp. 33–59.

The cultural underpinnings of slavery were colonial expansions by Western countries. Zionism witnesses uniquely to colonialism.

The Bible and the rise of Zionism

Michael Prior describes the rise of Zionism within the context of two other colonial expansions buttressed by extensive use of Scripture: Columbus's 'discovery' of a new world; and the Dutch and British colonial expansions into South Africa. These colonial expansions exploited Old Testament 'conquest ideology'. Scripture was thus used to 'justify' the post-Columbus (1492) settlements in the 'new world', leading to mass killings, even genocide, of native populations. As one writer from a Latina victim group puts it: 'The Bible came to us as part of the imposed colonial transformation. It was the ideological weapon of this colonialist assault. The Spanish sword which attacked and murdered the bodies of Indians by day and night became the cross which attacked the Indian soul.'[35]

Prior foregrounds his study of three major cases of colonialism by a chapter on 'The Biblical Traditions of the Land'.[36] Jewish Scripture is replete with land promises: God's promise of land to Abraham and his descendants and, amid exile, return to the land. Thus numerous texts readily underwrite new land settlements and expansion. This conquest ideology bolstered the religious rationale for the Dutch and British territorial claims in South Africa. While the claim to land in the Americas by Europeans and the Dutch settlement on the Cape of Good Hope preceded this time period, the British taking of the Cape in 1795 and the ensuing British–Boer wars were both sanctioned by copious appeal to Scripture.[37] Prior narrates an eight-point parallel between the 'biblical exodus/promised land story' and the later developed Afrikaner nationalist myth of their Great Trek north (1836, to escape British control). Both the Transvaal and Orange Free State were regarded as the land of their covenant with God. After the Dutch Afrikaners prevailed against the British and

[35] Pablo Richard, '1492: The Violence of God and the Future of Christianity', in Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo (eds.), *1492–1992: The Voices of the Victims*: *Concilium* 6 (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), pp. 64–5.

[36] Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism*, pp. 16–46.

[37] Prior narrates the main story line well (*The Bible and Colonialism*, pp. 72–5). It is told at more length, with the travail of the sufferings, in John W. de Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), and in even fuller detail in Hofmeyer and Pillay (eds.), *A History of Christianity in South Africa*. Other church groups besides Dutch Reformed and British Anglican were involved in mission efforts: Moravians very early, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Scottish churches.

established their Broederbond, they readily embraced Christian Nationalism: 'The Enlightenment dethroned God; but Afrikanerdom crowned Him as the sovereign of their Republic.'[38] Influenced by Darwin's theories on superior and inferior races, the groundwork for apartheid was laid (1910–48), institutionalising it for another fifty years.[39] Strikingly, 1948 marks the formal beginning of apartheid in South Africa and also the national birth of Israel in Palestine, which began another tiered system by those who self-identify as God's special people, causing great suffering for those already on the land.

The ideology of 'conquest and promised land' naturally lured many Jewish people 'home', claiming the biblical promises. Prior ably narrates the rise of Zionism.[40] Galvanised by the relentless efforts of Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) and others to shape a vision for the future of Jews as a people with Torah and land, Zionism was born. In 1917 the British cabinet approved the Balfour Declaration, thus favouring 'the establishment in Palestine of a national homeland for the Jewish people'.[41]

Though over a century in the political and biblical–theological making, the Zionist cause flowered with the establishment of the state of Israel in Palestine in 1948, and represents an imperialist, colonialist enterprise of far-reaching effect in the modern period. As Prior amply documents, as with the Americas and South Africa, the colonising of Palestine appealed profusely to Scripture to justify and legitimise what became policies to 'conquer and destroy' or 'conquer and corral' the indigenes.

Thirty-three essays in *Challenging Christian Zionism* are insightful and comprehensive. The first two and part of a third trace the historical roots of Zionism, first in the United Kingdom (Irving to Balfour: 1820–1918) and second in the United States (Blackstone to Bush: 1890–2004). Zionism in Britain advanced under the biblical–theological influence of Edward Irving and John Nelson Darby, buttressing the political–theological endorsement of Lord Shaftesbury (1801–85) and Lord Balfour (1848–1930) leading to the Balfour Declaration.[42] In the United States Darby's dispensational scheme, allied with fundamentalism,

[38] Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism*, p. 75, quoting Charles Bloomberg, *Christian-Nationalism and the Rise of the Afrikaner Broederbond in South Africa, 1918–48* (London: Macmillan, 1990).

[39] The biblical arguments for apartheid are similar to those for slavery, as I learned as a guest in Pretoria at the Congress on the Church and Apartheid (1982, headed by David Bosch).

[40] Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism*, pp. 106–73.

[41] Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism*, p. 125, with the text of the Declaration in a letter of 2 November sent from James Arthur Balfour to Lord Rothschild.

[42] For text of this Declaration, and the history leading to it, see Stephen Sizer, 'The Historical Roots of Christian Zionism from Irving to Balfour: Christian Zionism in the United

influenced Dwight Moody and his student William Blackstone (1841–1935). Blackstone's *Jesus is Coming* (1878, translated into forty-two languages) and the Cyrus Scofield Reference Bible (Oxford University Press, 1909) gave rise to end-time sensationalism, most recently cresting through influential media: for example, Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell and the *Left Behind* series.[43]

The wide-ranging scope of the essays in *Challenging Christian Zionism* enables us to grasp how use of Scripture, heightened by Israel's dramatic victories in the 1967 War, thus intertwined with politics, has strategically shaped the current world conflict in the Middle East, extending to two Iraqi wars, US funding of Israel and maintaining Israel's military sovereignty in the region.

Recently I have presented two contrasting readings on 'The Bible and Israel': the literal fundamentalist–dispensational view and the a-millennial church-fulfilment interpretation.[44] In the former, numerous Old Testament passages that promise return to the land are utilised to build the case that Israel's regaining statehood in 1948 fulfils the Scriptures. This use of Scripture ignores the fact that virtually all such promises referred historically to Israel's return to Palestine after the Babylonian exile. The opposing view puts these texts into their historical contexts to negate their present referents, but at the same time interprets numerous New Testament texts so that Messiah Jesus and the church not only fulfil Old Testament prophetic hopes for God's people, but thereby become the new Israel, displacing Israel as people of God, thus in effect revoking God's irrevocable promises to Israel (Rom. 11:29)! I critique both these views and seek a third way, to avoid justifying Israel's land claims through appeal to Scripture as well as the church's claims to supersession of Israel. Utilising John Howard Yoder and Daniel Boyarin's complementary contributions, I call for the necessary interdependence of Jews and Christians – the 'root and the vine'. As Yoder puts it regarding the Jewish–Christian schism, 'It Did Not Have to Be'.[45] For both, diaspora existence marks God's design for God's people: Jewish, anti-Zionist; and Christian, anti-Constantinian. Though

Kingdom (1820–1918)', in Ateek et al. (eds.), *Challenging Christian Zionism*, pp. 20–31 at p. 30. See also Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road-Map to Armageddon?* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2004) and Stephen Sizer, *Zion's Christian Soldiers: The Bible, Israel, and the Church* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

[43] See here two essays: Donald Wagner, 'From Blackstone to Bush: Christian Zionism in the United States (1890–2004)' and Gary Burge, 'Theological and Biblical Assumptions of Christian Zionism', both in Ateek et al. (eds.), *Challenging Christian Zionism*, pp. 32–44 and pp. 45–49 respectively.

[44] Willard M. Swartley, 'The Bible and Israel', in *Send Forth your Light: A Vision for Peace, Mission, and Worship* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2007), pp. 155–83.

[45] Chapter 2 in John Howard Yoder, *The Jewish–Christian Schism Revisited*, ed. Michael C. Carwright and Peter Ochs (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 43–68.

both regard fulfilment of God's mission for the respective peoples to be best achieved through diaspora–pilgrimage identity, yet a crucial difference exists: Christians 'go out' in mission to the whole world; Jews 'stay at home' and leave other people alone.[46]

War and peace: major issues in the Bible's influence

Latent within both Zionism and slavery are issues of justice, and indeed war and peace.

The war and peace issue has drawn more 'blood and tears' in biblical exegesis than any other over the course of Christian history. John Riches, in his excellent treatment of 'The Bible and Politics', observes that Romans 13:1, which counsels subjection to the powers because they are ordained of God, has probably been 'the most influential single text in the Bible'.[47] Of the different streams of New Testament teaching pertaining to Christian understanding of the state, Romans 13:1–7 and other similar 'subordinationist' texts have been the mainstay of a supine loyalty tradition of the church to the state, and, even further, a fusion of the authority and roles of both.[48] In *Covenant of Peace* I put in diagram form three sets of New Testament texts, with each column representing different understandings of the powers. One stream I identify as 'negative', containing criticism of the powers; another is 'positive', the loyalty tradition; and a third, 'normative' texts that speak of Christ's victory over the powers, thus freeing the church from the powers.[49] Walter Pilgrim has recognised three differing New Testament traditions regarding the powers as well: critical distancing; subordinationist; and endurance of oppression and persecution.[50]

Christians understand their relation to government powers differently. The stances of the various confessional churches exemplify the difficulty. Jürgen

[46] This statement blends Will Herberg's contrast of the mission of the two peoples with Boyarin's similar statement: in Swartley, 'The Bible and Israel', pp. 175, 177.

[47] John Riches, *The Bible: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 120. Riches credits this statement to Heikki Räisänen, a Finnish biblical scholar.

[48] For the persisting temptation to equate one's nation with God's kingdom and cause see Gregory A. Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power is Destroying the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

[49] Willard M. Swartley, *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics*, Studies in Peace and Scripture 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), p. 229. My most extensive and scholarly treatment is 'War and Peace in the New Testament', in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, vol. II, ed. Wolfgang Haase (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1996), part 26.3, pp. 2298–408; for this specific topic see pp. 2350–4.

[50] Walter E. Pilgrim, *Uneasy Neighbors: Church and State in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), pp. 7–36, 145–50. For my summary of Pilgrim's contribution, see Swartley,

Moltmann's analysis of the Lutheran, Reformed and Anabaptist resolutions is helpful. His own synthesis, forged out of his life experiences, draws on these theological traditions.[51] The stances Christians have taken regarding participation in war also differ.[52] That Christians should participate in war is represented by three different sets of arguments. Arthur Holmes represents the position held by many Evangelical Christians. Since God commanded Israel to participate in war, and the New Testament does not nullify the Old Testament on this matter, Christians should participate in government-declared wars:

> The reason for waging war which existed in ancient times, is equally valid in the present age … no express declaration on this subject [war] is to be expected in the writings of the Apostles, whose design was, not to organize civil governments, but to describe the spiritual kingdom of Christ … in these very writings it is implied, that no change [from the Old Testament] has been made in this respect by the coming of Christ.[53]

Representing a second stance for Christian participation in war, George Ernest Wright draws on the Old Testament God-as-Warrior motif. Other writers appeal to 'just war' rationale and/or Reinhold Niebuhr's ethics of necessity and realism to contain evil. However, for 'theologies of liberation and revolution', another rationale from oppressed peoples in Latin America and Asia dominates: violent revolution is necessary to stop oppression by imperialist nations.

Some in the non-resistant/pacifist position regard Israel's wars as God's will during nationhood; others contend that war even then was contrary to God's will. This latter view regards Israel's military culture as a failure to trust God for defence (Exod. 14:14).[54] Both views regard this era as morally superseded by Messiah Jesus' covenant.

The New Testament non-resistant/pacifist argument consists of five main dimensions:

1. Jesus teaches non-retaliation and love of enemy (so also the apostles).
2. The nature of God's kingdom and Jesus' messiahship supports this position.

Covenant of Peace, pp. 236–8, 328–9, 342–3. Walter Wink's trilogy on the 'powers' is essential also.

[51] See Moltmann's contribution in Willard M. Swartley (ed.), *Politics of Discipleship and Discipleship in Politics: Jürgen Moltmann Lectures in Dialogue with Mennonite Scholars* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2006), pp. 119–46.

[52] Swartley, *Covenant of Peace*, pp. 96–149.

[53] Quoted in Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*, p. 102.

[54] Millard C. Lind, *Yahweh is a Warrior: The Theology of Warfare in Ancient Israel* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980).

3. Christ's atonement calls for suffering (peacemaking) discipleship.
4. The nature and mission of the church leads to refusing war.
5. Peace is at the heart of the gospel.

Historic Peace Church believers hold that since God's people in Jesus Christ embrace citizens from every nation, Christian participation in war is 'out of order'. One cannot kill a brother/sister Christian, or the unsaved person for whom Christ died. Most Christians, however, mute that point by arguing for the necessity of war to contain evil. The dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, the collapse of the Berlin wall and downfall of dictatorship in the Philippines in 1989–91 witness, however, to the power of non-violent resistance as power to contain evil.

Within months of the United States' declaration of war on Germany on 6 April 1917 major church groups affirmed support.[55] Churches used Scripture to advocate for war, patriotism, civil religion and nationalism. During the Second World War American liberal pacifists shifted to at least a 'cautious' patriotic support of the war.[56]

During the Second World War both Protestants and Catholics[57] failed as institutional bodies to resist the demonic horrors of Nazism. *Many* individual Christians – Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox – sheltered Jews, risking their lives.[58] Over 13,000 engaged in rescue efforts, representing more than 5,000 rescue stories.[59] This resistance included monasteries, convents and small communities. The resistance of the Le Chambon community under André Trocmé's leadership is stunning, harbouring several thousand Jewish and

[55] Major church denominations and organisations, including the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, the Roman Catholic Church and sixteen Jewish organisations, immediately pledged support. See Abrams, *Preachers present arms*, esp. pp. 80–1. For sermons during the earlier colonial period (fifty-five of them) that integrate the gospel with religious liberty and its goals see Sandoz (ed.), *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era*.

[56] Sittser, *A Cautious Patriotism*. For A. J. Muste's qualified position – that pacifism was realistic and practicable against the war – see pp. 60–2. For Reinhold Niebuhr's extensive influence see pp. 49–76. For the Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite exception see pp. 47–8.

[57] Despite initial efforts to resist, the Roman Catholic Church fared no better than the Protestant churches in compromising with the Third Reich, though their hierarchical structure enabled unified response. For the initial Catholic efforts see Peter Matheson, 'The Concordat between the Papacy and the Third Reich, 20 July 1933', in *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches*, pp. 29–31. Matheson says, 'Virtually every clause was to be broken. Moreover the very existence of the Concordat fatally compromised Catholic moral resistance to Hitler' (p. 30).

[58] Mordecai Paldiel, *Sheltering the Jews: Stories of Holocaust Survivors* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), pp. 30–60. The many stories told here are phenomenal.

[59] Paldiel, *Sheltering the Jews*, pp. 205–6. For stories of resistance and analysis of the Second World War by 'just war' criteria see Michael Hovey, 'The Beatification of Franz Jägerstätter,

other anti-Nazi refugees.[60] Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer spoke boldly against Nazism, with both suffering imprisonment – and Bonhoeffer martyrdom – for the Christian cause. They were not alone. George Bell, in his numerous addresses to England's House of Lords, spoke often of the many brave church leaders who spoke out against Hitler and his demonic war: Cardinal Faulhaber, Count von Galen, Otto Dibelius, Bishop von Galen of Münster, Evangelical Bishop Wurm of Württemburg, Bishop von Preysing of Berlin in a 1942 Christmas letter, and the Catholic Bishops Conference in Fulda in 1942.[61] The failure of any of the Christian churches as official church bodies, even Mennonite, to oppose Hitler and Nazism's 'final solution' to exterminate the Jews is a sad indictment of the church institutionally. The gradual developments of National Socialism's rise to power, however, and the Protestant responses – split into three main groups (German Christians (supportive), middle (neutral) churches and Barmen-oriented Confessional churches (resisting)) – make it understandable why and how the churches failed to oppose Hitler's goals and skills to achieve them.[62] Four cultural, economic and political factors played into this tragic drama: the public shaming of Germany's national pride (*Schandvertrag*) by the Treaty of Versailles; Darwin's 'survival of the fittest' theories underpinning 'non-Aryan' discrimination; Hitler's promises to restore national pride; and his effective blocking of communism's threat. Three additional factors, biblically related, also played into the churches' failure: a biblical default setting to Romans 13:1 for the church's relation to government; interdependence between church and state (pastors paid from state funds); and pervasive anti-Semitism in German culture (owing

Report and Reflection', G. E. M. Anscombe and Norman Daniel, 'The Status of the Present War Examined', Catholic Peace Fellowship staff, 'Seven Perennial Questions', John C. Ford, 'The Morality of Obliteration Bombing', Anne Theriault, 'André Trocmé and Le Chambon' and Brenna Cussen, 'The White Rose Martyrs', all in *The Sign of Peace (Journal of the Catholic Peace Fellowship)* 6:2 (Winter), pp. 6–9, 10–15, 16–20, 22–5, 26–7 and 28–9 respectively.

[60] Philip P. Hallie, *Lest Innocent Blood be Shed: The Story of the Village of Le Chambon, and How Goodness Happened There* (New York: Harper, 1979). See also the account by Marlin E. Miller in André Trocmé, *Jesus and the Nonviolent Revolution*, trans. Michael H. Shank and Marlin E. Miller (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1973), pp. 5–9.

[61] George K. A. Bell, *The Church and Humanity* (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1946), pp. 90–3, 99–103, 166–71. Bell also names numerous ecumenical groups outside Germany that protested. Bell's chapter 'The Church's Function in Wartime', pp. 22–31, is a classic. See also p. 116.

[62] Victoria Barnette's method of analysis: *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest against Hitler* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) and Peter Matheson's publication of primary documents in *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches*. Klaus Scholder's masterful work *The Churches and the Third Reich* develops the struggle in more detail until 1934, with volume II subtitled *The Year of Disillusionment; 1934: Barmen and Rome*.

partly to Martin Luther, but also to some New Testament texts that when removed from their historical cultural location readily feed anti-Semitism). Karl Barth's leadership in the Barmen Declaration and Martin Niemöller's resistance to the degenerating state of affairs appeal to biblical teachings, that the church's identity transcends the state's power and manipulation, and for Barth, the biblical realism of human depravity. Barth's *Der Römerbrief* (published in 1919) had dealt a death blow to earlier liberal Protestant theology; his biblical realism on human nature was foundational to his resistance. Barth 'shouted' against Hitler's policies in 1934, protesting at the 'Aryan' ideals of the 'German Christians': 'the 'German Christians' worshipped a different God'.[63] Matheson comments that each article of the Barmen Declaration has a similar structure: 'Biblical authority, positive teaching, negative canon'. Barmen's 'Theses' show Scripture's priority.

The fact that so-called Christian nations fomented the First and Second World Wars, the Vietnam War and the Iraqi wars beckons 'just war' ethicists to second thoughts.

After the Second World War German biblical scholarship produced much exegetical work on peace, with many outstanding essays (1970–2000).[64] An interdisciplinary, twelve-year (1968–80) European scholarly study focused on peace issues: how the Bible addresses poverty, violence and oppression, producing a twelve-volume series, *Studien zur Friedensforschung*. Ulrich Luz describes this project in his article's preface.[65] But the paucity of biblical literature on peace in English until the Studies in Peace and Scripture series is striking.[66]

[63] Barnette, *For the Soul of the People*, p. 58. See also Barnette's account of the miracle-type all-night meeting yielding the Barmen Declaration (p. 64) and the key points of the Declaration (p. 68). See also Matheson, *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches*, pp. 45–7.

[64] Some are translated and appear in Perry B. Yoder and Willard M. Swartley (eds.), *The Meaning of Peace*, Studies in Peace and Scripture 2, 2nd edn. (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2001 [Westminster John Knox Press, 1992]). Other volumes in this series on peace and peace-related topics are: Ulrich Mauser, *The Gospel of Peace: A Scriptural Message for Today's World*, Studies in Peace and Scripture 1 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992); Willard M. Swartley (ed.), *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*, Studies in Peace and Scripture 3 (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992); Christopher D. Marshall, *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime and Punishment*, Studies in Peace and Scripture 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001); Swartley, *Covenant of Peace*.

[65] Ulrich Luz, 'The Significance of the Biblical Witnesses for Church Peace Action', in Yoder and Swartley (eds.), *The Meaning of Peace*, pp. 235–53.

[66] The essays in *HBT* 6 (1984) signalled renewed interest, valuing the place *shalom* and *eirēnē* might have in biblical theology. But as my Appendix 1 in *Covenant of Peace* (pp. 431–70) shows, peace (*eirēnē*) has not gained importance in texts on New Testament theology or ethics.

The lack of any comprehensive biblical theology that pays sustained attention to this theme throughout the Bible is a telling indictment upon our contemporary scholarship. Eugen Biser has noted this lacuna in his 1960 monograph in relation to theology generally. He says that the absence of any explicit theology of peace in the classical system is a strange fact. Writing again in 1969, he says that, except for a few essays, an explicit theology of peace is lacking.[67]

In contrast to this paucity of literature on peace in English prior to 1990,[68] many scholarly articles and books since 1970 highlight violence in the Bible, with different purposes: 'redeem' or denounce the text, expose it as patriarchal, provide rationale why Christians condone violence, or discount the authority of Scripture as moral exemplar.[69] Writers who expose the 'violence' of the Bible often minimise peace-making emphases.

The Bible's influence in society has been phenomenal, but not always positive. In addition to underwriting domestic and other forms of abuse, violence and war, it has elicited rejection, with counter-influences bringing elements of good and also horrific evil: the Enlightenment, Marxism and communism, Nazism and fascism. All these shape culture and society, with far-reaching cultural changes, affected also by paradigm shifts in science and technology.

Often bolstered by these influences, empire-building has been a dominant force in this quarter-millennium. Two recent books, both collections of essays by eminent scholars, document this new global reality, in the aftermath of earlier European countries' and British phases of empire. These analyses, among others, focus on the American empire, and its self-legitimising appeal to religious ideals or the Bible directly.[70] Stephen Chapman's essay on 'Imperial Exegesis' cites President George W. Bush's emotional address delivered one year after 9/11. His address ended using the language of John 1:4–5: '[The] ideal of America is the hope of all mankind. . . . That hope still lights our way.

[67] Eugen Biser, *Der Sinn des Friedens: ein theologischer Entwurf* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1960), pp. 34–5 n.5, and Eugen Biser, 'Der Friede Gottes', in E. Biser et al. (eds.), *Ist Friede machbar?* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1969), pp. 13–38 at p. 30.

[68] The exception is James Hastings, *The Christian Doctrine of Peace* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1922).

[69] For the New Testament see Swartley, *Covenant of Peace*, pp. 44–52, where I respond to authors such as Philip L. Tite, *Conceiving Peace and Violence: A New Testament Legacy* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 2004). Patricia M. McDonald addresses the issue for the Old Testament in *God and Violence: Biblical Resources for Living in a Small World* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2004).

[70] Wes Avram (ed.), *Anxious about Empire: Theological Essays on the New Global Realities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004); David Ray Griffin, John B. Cobb, Jr., Richard A. Falk and Catherine Keller, *The American Empire and the Commonwealth of God: A Political, Economic, and Religious Statement* (Louisville, KY and London: Westminster John Knox, 2006).

And the light shines in darkness. And the darkness will not overcome it. May God bless America.'[71] Chapman further expounds the imperial implications of Bush's identifying America's cause with Scripture, in light of his also identifying specific countries as the axis of evil. With numerous citations from Bush's addresses, Chapman proposes that Bush's speeches disclose a 'christological interpretation of America' signalled by allusion to 'There is power in the blood' – the power is in the 'idealism and faith of the American people' (Bush quote) – and America's role as that of the 'Good Samaritan' in the world.[72]

In view of this imperial reality the voice of liberation theology worldwide is crucially important, with imperial oppression as its contextual empowerment. Liberation theology in Latin America (Boff, Guttierez, Mesters, Segundo, Tamez)[73] counter-resists dominant imperial use of the Bible. Similarly, distinctive indigenous approaches to Scripture, often resisting Western hegemonic models, emerged in Asia (Minjung, Water Buffalo).[74]

The Bible and gender issues

From 1750 to 2000 freedom flourished in new ways, sometimes with appeal to the Bible. But the Scriptures were used to support not only slavery, colonialism and war, but also to discriminate on the basis of colour and gender, evident even in the United States Declaration of Independence! Women did not gain the right to vote until the Woman Suffrage Act of 20 August 1920, seventy-two years after the first Woman's Rights Convention held in 1848 at Seneca Falls, New York, for which Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote the famous 'Declaration of Sentiments'.[75] Her later *Woman's Bible* (1898) attests to the Bible's influence on the struggle for women's rights.

[71] Stephen B. Chapman, 'Imperial Exegesis: When Caesar Interprets Scripture', in Avram (ed.), *Anxious about Empire*, pp. 91–102 at pp. 91–2.

[72] Chapman, 'Imperial Exegesis', p. 95.

[73] One of the earlier classic sources is Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973). See also Rowland and Corner, *Liberating Exegesis* and Rowland (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*. Numerous chapters in Sugirtharajah (ed.), *Voices from the Margin*, are important here: Elsa Tamez, Renita Weems, Miguez-Bonino, Pixley and C. Boff, and Kirk-Duggan. Norman K. Gottwald (ed.), *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983) casts the liberation net wider with twenty-eight provocative essays, accentuating social science and feminist concerns.

[74] See chapters by Ahn Byung-Mu, A. Maria Arul Raja, George M. Soares-Prabhu and Hisao Kayama in Sugirtharajah (ed.), *Voices from the Margin*, and the variety of faith understandings in Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*.

[75] Janice E. Ruth and Evelyn Sinclair, *Women of the Suffrage Movement – Women who Dare* (Petaluma, CA: Pomegranate Communications, Inc. and Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 2006), p. 60.

Use of the Bible to support women's liberation surged in the last half of the twentieth century, first in Western countries and then universally, regarding women in leadership roles, in church and society. In *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women* I present the debate, with plenteous use of Scripture. Scriptural arguments, both hierarchical and liberationist, appear in five sections, consisting of three Genesis text sets (1:26–7, 5:1; 2:18–25; and 3:16) and four from Paul (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 11:2–16, 14:34–6; Rom. 16; and the Pastoral Epistles). Each of the four 'case issues' I address concludes with hermeneutical analysis.

Patriarchy looms large in this debate, with liberationists lamenting androcentric interpretation and exposing numerous biblical texts as oppressive, though some feminist writers 'redeem' those texts by reinterpretation. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza advanced the liberationist cause enormously, with a reconstruction of Christian origins through feminist lenses.[76] Luise Schottroff, Silvia Schroer and Marie-Theres Wacker contribute mostly German feminist contributions since Cady Stanton's *Woman's Bible*.[77]

When, however, African American or Third World womanist liberationists exposit, white feminist expositions too are found wanting, as in the notable article by Indian writer Mukto Barton. Whereas Phyllis Trible saw patriarchal prejudice in God smiting Miriam, but not Aaron, with leprosy – both had murmured against Moses for taking a Cushite wife – Barton objects. In her view Miriam, who with Aaron was undermining Moses' leadership because he took a black wife, fails doubly, not only on colour, but also on gender, not showing solidarity with her sister-in-law amid the oppression of male dominance.[78]

The literature on the Bible in feminist writings is voluminous, and rightly merits a separate chapter. Cady Stanton's model of *The Woman's Bible* has sparked other similar publications: *The Women's Bible Commentary* and *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary*.[79]

A current gender issue of intense biblical debate is same-sex relationships: homosexuality. The best single article representing fairly each side in the Scripture debate is Walter Moberly's 'The Use of Scripture in Contemporary

[76] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*.

[77] Luise Schottroff, Silvia Schroer and Marie-Theres Wacker, *Feminist Interpretation: The Bible in Women's Perspective*, trans. Martin and Barbara Rumscheit (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998 [1995 (in German)]).

[78] Mukti Barton, 'The Skin of Miriam Became as White as Snow: The Bible, Western Feminism, and Colour Politics', in Sugirtharajah (ed.), *Voices from the Margin*, pp. 158–68.

[79] Carol A. Newsom and Sharon Ringe (eds.), *The Women's Bible Commentary* (London and Louisville, KY: SPCK and Westminster John Knox, 1998) and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

Debate about Homosexuality'.[80] He cites only a few bibliographical references: Bradshaw's edited collection for range of perspectives, Countryman and Hays.[81] Four others are important for their original contributions, on both sides of the debate.[82] Five books of numerous essays have been widely influential within American churches' studies and debates.[83] Several resources analyse the use of Scripture in the debate and test the hermeneutical logic;[84] Charles Cosgrove examines the logic of such moral arguments.[85] The literature is rich, and the debate continues, with far-reaching effect upon society, threatening church splits. Writers who advocate acceptance do so by one or more interpretive strategies: relegate texts forbidding same-sex genital relations to that time and culture since we no longer keep most other Bible laws on sexual relations;[86] relativise those texts via historical-critical considerations (many authors); or counter those texts with other biblical moral considerations. Thus Acts 15 has emerged as a model for changing one's mind on key moral–theological issues.[87] The positive role of eunuchs in Scripture (Isa. 56:4–5; Matt. 19:12) has

[80] Walter Moberly, 'The Use of Scripture in Contemporary Debate about Homosexuality', *Theology* 103 (July–August 2000), pp. 251–8.

[81] Timothy Bradshaw (ed.), *The Way Forward?: Christian Voices on Homosexuality and the Church* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997; 2nd edn. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004); William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed, and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and their Implications for Today* (Philadephia: Fortress, 1988); Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Cross, Community, New Creation* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), pp. 379–406.

[82] Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Robert A. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001); Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); John Nolland, 'Romans 1:26–27 and the Homosexuality Debate', *HBT* 22 (June 2000), pp. 32–57.

[83] Sally B. and Donald E. Messer (eds.), *Caught in the Crossfire: Helping Christians Debate Homosexuality* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994); Jeffrey S. Siker (ed.), *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994); Choon-Leong Seow (ed.), *Homosexuality and Christian Community* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996); Robert L. Brawley (ed.), *Biblical Ethics and Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996); David L. Balch (ed.), *Homosexuality, Science, and the 'Plain Sense' of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000). In these five books we hear over sixty scholars debating the issue.

[84] Swartley, *Homosexuality*; William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

[85] Charles H. Cosgrove, *Appealing to Scripture in Moral Debate: Five Hermeneutical Rules* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

[86] For Walter Wink's view see Walter Wink, 'Homosexuality and the Bible', in Walter Wink (ed.), *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), pp. 33–49.

[87] This point emerged with significant voice by Jeffrey S. Siker, 'Homosexual Christians, the Bible, and Gentile Inclusion: Confessions of a Repentant Heterosexist', in Siker (ed.),

been considered: Ragnhild Schanke argues that the biblical words for eunuch in the Old and New Testaments may include those for homosexual.[88] In many contributions, justice is of primary concern. Originating in the West, the issue is now global, especially in those denominations that have one doctrinal polity for a global constituency (notably Anglican–Episcopal).[89]

This issue, like those in *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*, raises difficult questions in biblical interpretation. A crucial difference between the homosexuality issue, on the one hand, and slavery and war, on the other, is that whereas the Bible on surface-reading sanctions both slavery and war (not in the New Testament, however), the Bible forbids same-sex genital practices. To oppose slavery and war is to now regard as immoral what was scripturally moral. To affirm same-sex practice is to now regard as moral what was scripturally immoral. Viewed in a moral trajectory, same-sex practice is different from the other two.

Reflection on biblical interpretation

Having considered five areas of the Bible in society: slavery, colonialism (especially Israel and the land), war and peace, male–female role relationships (briefly) and same-sex relations, what learning might be derived from historical perspective on these issues? The twenty-two 'Learnings' for biblical interpretation in *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*[90] apply also to these topics. Some of these especially applicable here are:

1. Quoting texts out of context is to be avoided. On slavery and Israel's claim to the land, specific texts abound for justifying slavery and return to the land. Numerous specific texts proscribe same-sex genital relations. Historical context is crucial.
2. Are specific texts in conflict with basic moral values and emphases in the Bible? While one should not depreciate the authority of clear moral prescriptions or proscriptions in specific texts, one also must adjudicate between these and wider moral principles. On slavery most specific texts *regulate* its practice towards humane and even liberating conditions. With

Homosexuality in the Church, pp. 178–94. I demur on this point: see Swartley, *Homosexuality*, pp. 72–3.

[88] See Ragnhild Schanke, 'Were Homosexuals Included in the Concept: "Born Eunuchs", in Matthew 19:12?', M.Th. thesis, University of Manchester, 2003.

[89] Jenkins describes the North–South rift on homosexuality among Anglicans in *The New Faces of Christianity*, pp. 2–4.

[90] Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*, pp. 229–34.

one exception (Lev. 25:44–6), slavery is neither explicitly proscribed nor prescribed. But a moral trajectory is evident: to humanise the slave and finally regard him/her as a brother or sister. Then, as Barclay says, numerous teachings of Jesus apply, and these augur for liberation from slavery. The same applies to the question of homosexuality, though here specific texts proscribe same-sex relations. Other moral values must be considered also, especially holiness and justice – both pervasive biblical moral emphases. Some interpreters mute holiness to espouse justice. Some seek to honour both, accepting gays and lesbians, but not affirming practice.

3. Our social location influences our interpretation, and thus the interpretative process requires self-reflection and perhaps critique. Are we using the Bible to justify or benefit our positions of power? To what extent are we aware of the religious, social, political and economic factors affecting our interpretation? And how do personal factors related to our lives, loves, values and friendships affect our interpretation?
4. Interpreters must hear the voices of the poor and the persecuted, the oppressed and marginalised. Use of the Bible to justify oppression is not biblical. This applies especially to colonialist and imperialist politics. It applies also to treatment of gays and lesbians in our society, who have been oppressed. Many now, however, hold positions of power in Western society. Acceptance of same-sex practice is the dominant cultural trend. The relation of the Western church to the global church factors into this consideration also. On the issue of war, pacifists have been the minority voice, and in many cultures worldwide have suffered for their stance, especially in wartime.
5. Church tradition must be valued for both its positive and negative valence. On homosexuality, the church's tradition and Scripture have been generally opposed to homosexual relationships. But experience plays a contesting role. We must also assess the role of reason (science) and the Spirit.[91] Church tradition since the fourth century has favoured 'just war' theory, though church practice over the centuries has practised much 'unjust war'. Allied forces opposing Axis powers in the Second World War is probably the best case for just war, though Hiroshima and Nagasaki violate the criteria. The church preventing the war by solidarity–resistance was the higher road not taken.
6. The temporal and cultural distance between the biblical text and our present reality, together with the contribution of the historical-critical method,

[91] Swartley, *Homosexuality*, pp. 126–30.

as well as the social scientific method, must also be assessed. Even in these, differences in theological perspective and judgement complicate the hermeneutical process. Interpretation is not value free. The interpreter's values, even biases, play into the use of these methods, with anachronism ever lurking at the door of interpreting ancient texts.

These points – and there are more – show why discernment in biblical interpretation on social moral issues has been difficult in the past, and why it continues to be difficult today. At play always is our vision of the world and society that we hope for, in faithfulness to God, with peace and wholeness for all humankind.

Conclusion

Most Western cultures at the dawn of the twenty-first century, though now pluralist with large proportions secular, have been deeply influenced by the Bible. The same is increasingly true of Christianity in the global South. Philip Jenkins contends that Christianity in the global South breathes a freshness and authenticity in its use of the Bible that appears no longer possible in the North.[92] The culture of the global South is closer to the social, cultural and intellectual milieu of biblical times – and thus the Bible appeals, producing phenomenal church growth. While the Bible has played a salutary role in shaping Western societies historically, its future may lie more with the global South than the North (the traditional West). North America is hybrid, with segments of society desiring that the Bible as divine revelation shape their lives and values; but many also 'walk away' from the Bible for numerous reasons, modern and postmodern.

[92] Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity*, pp. 5–7, 178, 185–93.

31

The Bible in literature

ELENA VOLKOVA

'Seraphic Christianity', or the Bible of sensibility

The Reformation's emphasis on the Bible as the major authority and the appearance of German criticism inspired many writers of the Enlightenment and the age of Romanticism to present biblical characters and stories in a new humanistic light. While philosophy cultivated rational criticism, literature saw the divine centre for individual revelation in the heart. First and foremost, writers presented new interpretations of negative or suffering biblical characters who seem to have been unfairly punished or cursed by God: Adam and Eve, Cain, Hagar, Ishmael, Saul, Job, and, later in the nineteenth century, Mary Magdalene and Judas. Literature becomes a vehicle for the humanistic *rehabilitation* of those who are seen as innocent victims of an unjust and merciless Old Testament God. Inspired by the Christian revelation of God as a God of love, literature often rewrites the Bible in a sympathetic and forgiving spirit, while trying, with humane psychological understanding, to interpret sinners as tragic or heroic figures.

In German literature a new patriotic and religious era began in 1748 with the publication of the three opening cantos of *The Messiah* by Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, whose poem starts with Jesus Christ praying in Gethsemane, and closes with the Messiah's completion of His mission of redemption – with Him ascended into heaven and sitting at the right hand of God. Klopstock was greatly influenced by *Paradise Lost* (translated by Bodmer in 1732): he aimed to surpass Milton and bring glory to his country, but failed, as history showed, because of the excessive sentimentalism, evident in his *The Death of Adam* (1757), Johann Jacob Bodmer's *Noahide* (1753), Christopher Wieland's *The Trial of Abraham* (1753), Solomon Gessner's *The Death of Abel* (1758) and other biblical narratives of the time, which are overladen with – mostly melancholy and mourning – ecstatic states of mind, but which, nevertheless, usually end happily because of love almighty, as preached by the literature of sensibility

(influenced by pietism and 'natural religion'). Love and conscience transform many characters: Cain quickly moves from anger to remorse; even evil spirits can repent and return to God. Early German sentimentalism (1750–70) creates dramatic biblical conflicts, but often resolves them too easily, through emotion, without any deep reflection on the problems of human sin or theodicy.

However, a great variety of psychological types were created, and a new rehabilitation strategy was established, which provided material for their followers.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing protested against the 'bibliolatry' of Protestantism: in 1774–8 he published H. S. Reimarus's essays as *Fragments of the Unknown Author*, which marked the beginning of the quest for the historical Jesus and gave a new impulse to free artistic treatment of the Bible as a text perceived by the mind and heart in favour of moral perfection, understood as love, patience, meekness, generosity and religious tolerance. In his last play, *Nathan the Wise* (1779), which was banned by the church during Lessing's life and in the twentieth century by the Nazis, there are three wise men (by analogy with the Magi) – a Jewish merchant, Nathan, an anonymous Templar and Sultan Saladin – who represent the three world religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which are equally able to enlighten the human mind. Nathan recalls his biblical prototype (the prophet Nathan who told David the parable of the 'one little ewe sheep' stolen from a poor man as a means of accusing the king for his adultery with Bathsheba, 2 Sam. 12:1–12) by telling the ring parable (borrowed from Boccaccio) to the sultan when asked which faith is the true one, in order to teach the moral lesson that human behaviour is all that matters in the eyes of God and humanity – claiming orthopraxis (correct life practice) as the criteria of orthodoxy (correct faith).

Goethe's *Faust* adds a new theological dimension to German sentimentalism with its 'Prologue in Heaven' based on the opening chapter of the book of Job. Goethe greatly valued the Bible: 'I look upon all four Gospels as thoroughly genuine, for there shines forth from them the reflected splendour of a sublimity proceeding from Jesus Christ.' His play begins and ends in heaven: however ironic the introductory dialogue between Mephistopheles and God may sound, it proves Leibnitz's idea that evil forms part of a totally good universe, ruled by God. The resounding church chant 'Christ is risen!' prevents the professor from committing suicide on the night of Holy Saturday. He, like Martin Luther, wants to translate the Bible into German, but for the Greek *logos* at the beginning of John's Gospel ('In the beginning was the Word') uses the word *Tat* ('deed'). Although the Devil's pact by no means makes Faust a better man, he is eventually forgiven by God and ascends to heaven, saved not

by his *deeds*, but by divine grace and Gretchen's love. Faust as the Job of the Age of Reason shows the movement from righteousness to knowledge, from an abstract idea of God to the divine and demonic working within the human mind and heart.

In England William Blake paints Job as a romantic rebel in his illustrations of the book of Job (1825), while in the twentieth century the most significant fictional interpretations of the Job story and theodicy are presented by Joseph Roth's *Job* (1930), a Jewish parable telling of the sorrows and spiritual struggles of 'pious, God-fearing and ordinary' Mendel Singer, a Torah teacher in Russia, who has to emigrate to America, where he finally discovers that his sick, retarded son Menuchim has become a world-famous musician; and Archibald MacLeish's *J.B.* (1958) – the story of an American businessman which appeals to its readers, very much in the tradition of literature of sensibility, 'to blow on the coal of the heart' in order to be able to pass through human valleys of deep darkness.

In Russia, a country which had no Reformation, the scientist and poet Mikhail Lomonosov's paraphrase of God's speech from Job (*The Ode, Selected from the Book of Job*, 1743–51) warns humanity against rebellion, calling for complete obedience and trust in God.

The age of Cain: Romanticism and symbolism

German Romantic aesthetics (e.g. Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich Hölderlin, Novalis, Schelling) raised art above speculative theology: Schlegel and Novalis dreamed of universal poetry, and saw the novel as the bible of the new religion to be created by German philosophers and artists. Romantics revived a classical idea of the divine artist who, like a biblical prophet, carries God's message to humanity, but is not recognised and is persecuted by them. Romanticism abounds in 'prophet poems' (e.g. those of Grey, Blake, Novalis, Pushkin, Lermontov, Whitman) and establishes the poet-prophet archetype later to be developed by symbolists and American beatniks.

William Blake also wanted to create his own religion: he identifies God with Poetic Genius, finds errors in 'all Bibles and sacred codes', speaks of the Devil as the poet's 'particular friend' with whom he reads the Bible 'in its infernal or diabolic sense, which the world shall have whether they will or no' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*). In the artistic theology of William Blake the Poetic Genius is 'the eternal all-protecting Divine Humanity/ To Whom be the Glory & Power & Dominion Evermore. Amen' (*Milton*, 14, 1–3), 'the Human Imagination/ Which is the Divine Body of the Lord Jesus, blessed

for ever'. As Christopher Burdon emphasises, 'in Blake's gospel, art replaces conventional religion', 'the words of Jesus about discipleship and gospel are applied to the practice of art, and a man or woman who is not in some sense an artist or who is an "unproductive Man" 'is not a Christian'.[1]

Some Romantics denied the validity of traditional biblical and ecclesiological teaching and, by contrast, idealised Satan, Cain, the Wandering Jew. Cain, as a vagabond, haunted by painful guilt, became a biblical prototype for the archetypal Romantic character (later called the Byronic hero), filled with a spirit of rebellion, isolation, melancholy, who longs for the lost paradise (e.g. Childe Harold, Corsair, Chateaubriand's René, Benjamin Constant's Adolphe, E. T. A. Hoffmann's monk in *Die Elixiere des Teufels*, Aleksander Pushkin's Onegin, Mikhail Lermontov's Pechorin etc.).

Traditionally mentioned as a curse, Cain (after Gessner) becomes a son who suffers from lack of parental love, feels obsessive jealousy towards his sibling, and appears as an outsider and a rebel, a desperately unhappy man to be pitied. In Coleridge's *The Wandering of Cain* (1798) and Blake's *Ghost of Abel* (1822) Abel, the victim of Cain, traditionally seen as a prototype for Christ, appears as a Gothic spectre, who rises from the demonic realm of the 'God of the dead', or Satan, either reproaching Cain or seeking revenge. Coleridge introduces this theme into his 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798), where a Cain-like figure, with an albatross hanging about his neck as the mark of Cain, wanders through the world as a symbolic reminder of humanity's sin against God and nature.

Byron's mystery drama *Cain* (1822) is by no means a sentimental call of eighteenth-century compassion and tolerance towards sinners; his hero is a tragic metaphysical rebel against God and the world establishment, an ambivalent figure, who initially sees himself as an innocent victim of a tyrannical god and turns to Lucifer, but, having murdered Abel, realises his own sin, repents and experiences the mercy of God, who protects him from vengeance. Cain is a Romantic Everyman, for he is a typical rationalist who despises the unknown and thinks of God in terms of political power and justice. He is also a Romantic Faust because he wants to find answers to ultimate questions: why man should be punished for Adam and Eve's disobedience? What did people learn from the Tree of Knowledge except mortality? How can God be totally good if people suffer? If He loves the world why does He accept a blood sacrifice?

[1] Christopher Burdon, 'William Blake', in Hass et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, pp. 448–64 at p. 457.

Inspired by Byron, French symbolists create their own rebellious versions of Cain (Baudelaire's *Abel and Cain*, Leconte de Lisle's *Cain*), a symbol of the poor and oppressed, called to hurl God the tyrant to the ground and reconquer Eden. In their poetry the social dimension prevails over the metaphysical, the character of Cain becomes more aggressive (as later in Anton Wildgans' *Cain* (1920), and in George Bernard Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* (1921). Sol Liptzin observes in his *Biblical Themes in World Literature* that Cain and Abel's conflict in the Bible is restored in twentieth-century post-Holocaust literature where the two brothers are presented as symbols of German Nazism and its Jewish victims.

Russian symbolist Maximilian Voloshin in his poem *Along Cain's ways, Tragedy of Materialistic Culture* (1922) refers to the biblical Cain as a builder of the first city and presents him as a tragic eschatological symbol of European civilisation, which proved that 'machine has won over man', 'that there is no spirit, only substance', 'that genius is a degeneration, that there is One Universal Worldly Stomach, and there are no other Gods beside it'. Written during the communist terror in Russia, the poem is for the most part a reaction against the violent policies of the barbaric anti-Christian regime based on a materialistic ideology.

Saul, the first king of Israel, may be identified as a Cain-like figure in literature: he also disobeys God and is punished (by Samuel anointing the young shepherd David as a new king), feels envious and wishes to kill his rival. Like Cain, Saul most often receives sympathetic treatment by writers: Voltaire presents him in his anti-clerical drama *Saul* (1763) as an innocent victim of the cruel prophet Samuel. Paradoxically the author, looked upon as almost an anti-Christ, preaches the Christian values of peace and mercy through Saul's revolt against the vicious Devil-like God, who issued a command 'to destroy all the Amalekites without sparing women, or maidens, or children, or beast'. The opposition of Samuel's God of Vengeance and Saul's God of Mercy may be found later in Karl Gutzkow's *King Saul* (1839), Karl Beck's *Saul*, J. G. Fischer's *Saul* (1862), Max Zweig's *Saul* and David Pinski's *Shaul* (1955), the latter referring Saul's quest for mercy to the theodicy of Holocaust.

Saul remains a rebellious though tragic figure, obsessed by the dark spirit of jealousy and revenge in Vittorio Alfieri's *Saul* (1784) – a sentimental Italian tragedy, in which Jonathan and Michal, embodiments of true friendship and love, try to melt the king's heart. This interpretation is developed in Alphonse de Lamartine's *Saul* (1818), also influenced by Lord Byron's two poems of the *Hebrew Melodies* (1816), which portray Saul as a fearless warrior facing the apparition of Samuel as a messenger of death.

Howard Nemerov writes a modernist response to Byron (a verse play *Cain*), identifying God with the serpent that tempts Eve in Eden and presenting Cain as not a tragic but a chosen heroic figure, 'who shall be honoured among men that curse him', while John Steinbeck in *East of Eden* (1952) returns to the traditional juxtaposition of Abel and Cain as allegories of good and evil between which man can always make a choice.

Lives of Jesus

Since the Enlightenment numerous biographies of Jesus Christ have been written as attempts to fill gaps in the Synoptic Gospels' account and to envision Christ ('We have never seen his face. We have never heard his voice. We do not really know what he looked like,' so the Japanese novelist Shusaku Endo begins his *Life of Jesus* (1973)) as well as to reveal 'the historical Jesus', 'the true Jesus' and 'the faith-image Jesus'. Several waves of the 'quest for the historical Jesus' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries produced a great variety of academic and fictional concepts and images, that tried to bring the figure of Christ closer to human earthly experience, to emphasise his psychological nature, introducing him (to different degrees) more as Son of Man than Son of God. It is difficult sometimes to distinguish imaginative Christological fiction from academic lives of Jesus. The most controversial and influential theological *Life of Jesus* (1835–6) was written by David Friedrich Strauss (translated into English by George Eliot in 1846), who sees Gospel miracles and prophecies as myths (with little or no historical ground behind them) that embody religious ideas and expectations of the time. The mythical interpretation of the Bible gave a strong impulse for further fictionalisation of Christ's life. Another widely influential, but more novelistic in style, *Life of Jesus* was written by a French Orientalist scholar Ernest Renan (1863), who presented Jesus Christ as a remarkable man: 'the incomparable hero of the passion, the founder of the rights of the conscience, the complete exemplar whom all suffering souls will contemplate to fortify and console themselves'.[2]

In 1906 the history of nineteenth-century *Lives of Jesus* was traced by Albert Schweitzer, who regretted that the historical Jesus 'was too small, because we had forced him into conformity with our human standards and human psychology' while it is 'Jesus as spiritually arisen within men, who is significant for our time and can help it'.[3] A Russian novelist and philosopher,

[2] Ernest Renan, *Life of Jesus*, trans. William G. Hutchison (London: Walter Scott, 1897), p. 240.

[3] Schweitzer, *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 399–400.

Dmitry Merezhkovsky, criticised the mythological method as anti-Christian 'mythomania', and called Renan's book a poisonous 'gospel according to Pilot'. He based his *Jesus the Unknown* (1932) mostly on apocryphal texts in order to tell of the Son of God in a new surprising way as of the divine mystery revealed to the world. Another Russian author, Nikolay Notovich, claimed in his *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ* (first published in French in 1894) that during the so-called Silent Years from twelve to thirty, about which the Gospels say nothing, Jesus (Saint Issa) travelled to India, where he studied Buddhism, and then to Persia, where he preached to the Zoroastrians. More orthodox English lives of Jesus were written in the Victorian period, including *Ecce Homo* (1865) by John Seeley, *The Life of Christ* (1874) by F. W. Farrar and *Life and Words of Christ* (1877) by J. Cunningham Geikie.

The Life of Jesus in World Poetry anthology (1997) shows a great variety of different images: among them are Jesus Christ as Romantic divine hero: 'the Solitary, suffering his loneliness from other people, but deeply in touch with nature'; 'modernism's shrunken, pathetically human Jesus'; an African 'political figure of the nation's sacrificial suffering'; the twentieth century Jesus of 'a wasteland – a world shattered by evil and nearly empty of hope'; and an everlasting figure of the Saviour sustained by traditional faith.[4]

Christ-like figures

Edwin Moseley in his *Pseudonyms of Christ in the Modern Novel* (1962) observes that

> almost every important writer in our milieu has at one time or another utilized Christ as a *Leitmotif* or as a major symbol. I am not referring to the flood of novels which attempt to recreate a facet of the Scriptures for better or for worse, such as Ben Hur, Quo Vadis, The Nazarene, The Robe, but to sincere books which enrich contemporary themes by the employment of the chief objective correlative of our culture. . . . The correlative of Christ is the *something* through which the Western writer frequently gets at *everything*.[5]

Moseley's irony towards Jesus novels raises a problem of the artistic quality of biblical literature: evidently most fictional Jesus narratives belong to second-rate literature. Murray Roston in *Biblical Drama in England* particularly comments that 'the nineteenth century offered a selection of biblical drama quantitatively rich yet qualitatively poor. . . . Of more than sixty scriptural plays

[4] Atwan et al. (eds.), *Divine Inspiration*, pp. xxxv, xxxviii, xliii.
[5] Moseley, *Pseudonyms of Christ*, pp. 34–5.

published during this period, almost all have sunk into a deserved obscurity.'[6] Moseley offers a list of the classical 'saviour-archetypes', among which are the Tragic Hero (Conrad's *Lord Jim*), the Archetypal Son and Doctor (Turgenev's Bazarov in *Fathers and Sons*), the Artist and Lover (D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*), the Missing Orient (Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby*), the Brother of Man (Steinbeck's Jim Casy in *The Grapes of Wrath*, as an exodus type of novel), the Existentialist Antichrist (Camus' *The Stranger*), the Doomed Youth, the Social Scapegoat and the Marxist Variant. Some scholars believe that Jesus-like heroes are widely incorporated into nineteenth-century novels partly due to Christian socialism as, for example, in Elizabeth Linton's *The True History of Joshua Davidson* (1872), Archibald McCowan's *Christ, the Socialist* (1894), Elizabeth Phelps's *A Singular Life* (1895), Benito Pérez Galdós's *Nazarín* (1895).

Theodore Ziolkowski in his *Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus* (1972) introduces a new term which gives a theoretical justification to such a broad understanding of Christ images: 'transfiguration' is 'a fictional narrative in which the character and the action, irrespective of meaning or theme, are prefigured to a noticeable extent by figures and events popularly associated with the life of Jesus as it is known from the Gospels'. Ziolkowski offers his own typology which includes the Christian Socialist Jesus; the Christomaniacs, or the psychiatric paranoid Jesus (the major character in Gerhart Hauptmann's *The Fool in Christ Emanuel Quint* (1910)); a farmer, a clerk and an electrician in Milton Rokeach's *The Three Christs of Ypsilanti* (1964); the protagonist in *Jesus in the Bohemian Forest* (1927) by the Austrian writer Robert Michel, and Manolios in Nikos Kazantzakis's *The Greek Passion* (1948); the Mythic Jesus (Emil Sinclair and Max Demian in Hermann Hesse's *Demian* (1919)); Carlo Coccioli's *Manuel the Mexican* (1956); 'the obscure corporal' in William Faulkner's *Fable* (1954); and Comrade Jesus (Steinbeck's Jim Casy, Richard Crossman's *The God that Failed* (1949)); Pietro Spina in Ignazio Silone's *Bread and Wine* (1936). Ziolkowski distinguishes the 'transfigurations' of Jesus 'from four other categories of fiction with which they are often confused: the fictionalizing biography; *Jesus redivivus*; the *imitatio Christi*; pseudonyms of Christ' (although Moseley's 'pseudonyms' are certainly transfigurations), insisting on the formal, not ideological nature of the parallels.[7]

John Warwick Montgomery in his critique of the formal approach argues: 'If virtually anything is a Christ-figure, nothing is a Christ-figure, and the apologist has fallen back entirely into the miasma of an uncritical, individualistic

[6] Roston, *Biblical Drama in England*, p. 219.
[7] Ziolkowski, *Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus*, pp. 6, 16, 13, 9.

subjectivism. This is brought out hilariously by Frederick C. Crews as he "discovers" a Christ-image in A. A. Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh.'[8]

The number of Christ-like figures will be considerably reduced if we look at kerygmatic characters, consciously motivated by Christian mission, as, for example Sonya Marmeladova in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*, or Aleosha and monk Zosima in *Brothers Karamazov*. Sonya (a diminutive name from 'Sophia' – Greek for 'wisdom') is a transfiguration of the biblical repentant wanton woman, who washed Jesus' 'feet with tears and did wipe them with the hairs of her head', and 'her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much' (Luke 7:38, 47). She has to sell her body so the rest of her family could survive, but her soul is untouched by the sin and is burning with faith in Jesus Christ. She believes that God will raise the dead heart of the murderer as He raised the dead body of Lazarus, whose story she reads out to Raskolnikov, while 'the candle-end was flickering out in the battered candlestick, dimly lighting up in the poverty-stricken room the murderer and the harlot who had so strangely been reading together the eternal book'. Sonya is a true Christ-like figure because she preaches repentance, love and redemptive suffering through which Raskolnikov will hopefully be saved. Her father Marmeladov (a transfiguration of the biblical repentant criminal crucified next to Christ) believes that God will forgive his daughter and all the sinners, 'because they none of them ever believed themselves worthy of it'. The best known character of the repentant criminal is presented in Pär Lagerkvist's novel *Barabbas* (1950).

Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin the Idiot refers to the medieval hagiographic type of the Holy Fool, who is not of this world, and whose 'fool-likeness' reveals the insanity of the world around him. Holy Fools enter society, as Christ, to show that the Heavenly Kingdom is within one's soul, but only those pure in heart can see it. Dostoevsky, a 'spiritual realist', saw writing as a religious mission to restore the divine image of the fallen Man. According to Dostoevsky, it is love that makes people able to see the Imago Dei inside one's soul through the dirt of sins, and by seeing it, to restore the ideal, iconic image of man. This is how the Idiot sees Nastasya Filippovna, how Sonya Marmeladova and Raskolnikov see one another. In his last novel *The Brothers Karamazov* Dostoevsky borrowed an archetype from Russian hagiography: his elder Zosima is a verbal icon, a man of great grace opposed to the false saint: Ferapont, man of law. Some of Dostoevsky's works were prophetic: in

[8] Fuller and Montgomery, *Myth, Allegory, and Gospel*, p. 24.

his speech on Pushkin (1880) he expressed the hope that Russia would offer a word of all-embracing Christian love to the nations of Europe.

The culminating point of *The Brothers Karamazov* is the chapter entitled 'The Grand Inquisitor' telling how Christ, having returned to earth during the Spanish Inquisition, is put into prison as a heretic by a Catholic cardinal whose teaching recalls Satan's arguments during his temptations of Christ in the wilderness: 'You objected that man does not live by bread alone, but do you know that in the name of this very earthly bread the spirit of earth will rise against you and fight you and defeat you.' As Bruce Ward writes in the book *Remembering the End*, 'No other part of Dostoevsky's oeuvre has inspired so large and so diverse a body of interpretation. Is it an utterly devastating attack on Christianity; or, as Berdyaev would have it, an expression of Dostoevsky's entire 'Christian metaphysic'? . . . If the silent prisoner is indeed Christ, is he the Christ of Protestantism? Or of Orthodoxy? Or is he Ivan's version of the 'historical Jesus'? Who *does* love humanity more? Where does 'The Grand Inquisitor' cease to be Ivan's 'poem' and become Dostoevsky's religious-political apocalypse?'[9] Dostoevsky may be called a Russian Dante, for his characters pass through psychological hell and purgatory, which have also a social embodiment – gloomy St Petersburg crowded with poor people, fiery passions, despair, fixed ideas, false theories that justify murder or were aimed at building an 'ideal' society (*The Demons*, 1872).

Another great Russian novelist, Leo Tolstoy, whose works abound in biblical transfigurations, based his *Confession* on Ecclesiastes' pattern and made his own translation of the Four Gospels (*A Harmony and Translation of the Four Gospels*, 1880–91) in which he presented Christ as just a man – a moral preacher, whose call to 'turn the other cheek' and 'resist not evil' were taken to be the principles of Tolstoy's teaching of non-violence and non-resistance. Tolstoy re-examined Orthodox Christian theology (*A Critique of Dogmatic Theology*, 1880–3), denied the doctrine of the trinity, the virginity of the Mother of God, rejected the Old Testament, all Gospel miracles and church sacraments. For him Christ's moral teaching was incompatible with wars, law-courts, aristocratic luxury and a state supported by brutal forces. He believed that his religious ideas were best expressed in his last novel *Resurrection* (1899). In his novel *War and Peace* two major characters, named after two disciples of Christ – Andrew and Peter (Pier) – having passed through many temptations

[9] Kroeker and Ward, *Remembering the End*, p. 38.

and sufferings, obtain inner peace in the 'godly love' of humanity, which, for Tolstoy, embodies the essence of Christianity. In his short story *Where Love is There God is* Christ visits an impoverished cobbler in the image of the three poor strangers, each of whom needs the cobbler's help.

A metaphorical approach to the character of Jesus Christ seems to be most valid because it doesn't pretend to depict the whole 'personality' of God (as direct representations of Jesus inevitably would do), but embodies some aspects of the divine. There are many figurative images in the Old Testament, Jesus Christ used many metaphors and parables to speak of the Heavenly Kingdom, of God the Father and himself as the revelation of God. Biblical bird symbolism, for example, may be seen in Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner', since the albatross descends from heaven down to people, is called the 'Christian soul hailed in God's name' and 'pious bird of good omen', saves the ship, but suddenly is shot by the Ancient Mariner, as Jesus Christ came in the name of God to save people, but was crucified. In Alexander Pushkin's fairy tale *Golden Cockerel* there is also a bird, that comes to save man, but fails. As a biblical allusion the cock may embody Christ as a vigilant preacher calling the sleeping sinners, and certainly refers to the cock which made St Peter repent his denial of Jesus.

Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, called the bible of American literature (on the whole there are about fourteen hundred allusions to the Bible in Melville's works), refers to many biblical images (Leviathan, Whale, Noah's Ark, Jonah, Ahab, Ishmael, Rachel etc.), in the centre of which is the antinomian White Whale (a symbol of the almighty God or Devil) and a problem of theodicy. Ahab may be interpreted as an allegory of the suffering man who sees God as a source of evil and rebels against Him as if He were the Devil: 'All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby Dick.' As Ilana Pardes observes, 'no one was as insistent as Melville on redefining biblical exegesis. . . . In *Moby Dick* he not only ventured to fashion a grand new, inverted Bible, in which biblical rebels and outcasts assume central stage, but also inspired at the same time to comment on every imaginable mode of biblical interpretation, calling for a radical reconsideration of the politics of biblical reception.'[10]

[10] Ilana Pardes, *Melville's Bibles* (Berkley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2008), p. 1.

Jesus Christ and Pontius Pilate

Pontius Pilate traditionally plays an important role in literature about Jesus, presenting the conflict between earthly and divine power and wisdom. Anatole France in his short story *The Procurator of Judaea* (1902) shows the elderly Pontius Pilate, talking with a friend from the Judaean days about the hard time he had had with stubborn and rebellious Jews. To the question as to whether he remembers a young Jew called Jesus, who was crucified for some crime, Pilate, after a pause, murmurs: 'Jesus? Jesus – of Nazareth? I cannot call him to mind.' However, his answer may be understood in two quite different ways: Pilate either speaks the truth, or lies because it is too painful for him to recall the events of that memorable crucifixion.

In Karel Capek's story *Pilate's Creed* (1920) the procurator tells Joseph of Arimathaea that he crucified Jesus because he considered his ideology to be dangerous and predicted that Jesus' disciples 'would possess a totalizing ideology that denies all others', would crucify opponents for their truths and 'hoist other Barabbases on their shoulders'. In Capek's *Pilate's Evening* (1932) the procurator exclaims 'What a futile thing it is to govern!' and wishes that the people of Bethlehem had come to defend Jesus and thus restored his faith in humanity.

In Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* (1940) set in the Moscow of the 1930s and Yerushalaim (Jerusalem) of the 30s CE, a Russian writer under a communist atheist regime writes a historical novel about Pontius Pilate and a wandering philosopher Yeshua Ha-Nozri (Jesus from Nazareth), for which he is put into a lunatic asylum. Pilate is presented as a miserable man, who suffers from hemicrania, silently pleading for poison, tormented at the sound of Yeshua's voice; he says that the procurator is too much locked up within himself and has lost all faith in human beings. Pilate recognises his own cowardice and wishes more than anything that he had not sent Yeshua to his death. Some critics see Pilate as a ruthless dictator and identify him with Stalin, while others see him as an allegory of those who 'washed their hands' by taking part in the crimes committed by Stalin. However, political interpretations hardly take into account the human aspects of Pilate, who is certainly impressed by the words of Yeshua and later in a dream sees them walking together along 'a stairway of the moon'.

The rapid development of Pilate literature in the twentieth century resulted in a wide range of fictional transfigurations which present the procurator of Judaea as a cynical politician (James R. Mills's *Gospel According to Pontius Pilate* (1978)), as racked with guilt and trying to discover the facts about the

crucifixion (J. F. Blackburn's *The Flame and the Wind* (1967); Anthony Burgess's *Man of Nazareth* (1979)), or trying to give a rational explanation for Christ's resurrection (Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt's *Gospel According to Pilate* (2000)). This echoes William Blake's statement (in his *Annotations to Bacon's Essays*) that 'Rational Truth is not the Truth of Christ, but of Pilate'.

The Age of Judas

> He might have become a saint,
> the patron of all of us who constantly betray Christ.
> François Mauriac

The artistic rehabilitation of Judas began in the eighteenth century with the sentimental portrayal painted by Klopstock, continued into the nineteenth century with Matthew Arnold's sympathetic image of Judas who is granted an hour's respite from hell on Christmas Eve because he once gave his cloak to a leper ('St Brandan', 1860) and with Renan's image portraying him as more accursed than he should be – for although a traitor he had expressed remorse and through his suicide he had proved that he had not lost his moral sense. The twentieth century may be described as the Age of Judas, when a great many literary and film representations of Judas emerged, culminating in the discovery of the Gospel of Judas manuscript. Taken together they provided material for diverse typologies of the biblical archetype. Kim Paffenroth in his book *Judas: Images of the Lost Disciple* analyses Judas as an object of curiosity (Jude the Obscure), of horror (Arch-Sinner), of hatred and derision (Villain), of admiration and sympathy (Tragic Hero), and of hope and emulation (Penitent); Richard Walsh in his literary reading of the Gospels presents Judas as 'a victim of apocalyptic fatalism, a repentant murderer, an apostate apostle, and a demonic thief'.[11] However, most writers and scholars focus on the motivation behind the betrayal: filthy lucre and cynicism (in Mikhail Saltykov-Schedrin's *Iudushka Golovlev* the main character 'Little Judas' is a gloomy image of dehumanised humanity; Bulgakov's Judas is an allegory of a communist informer, who sees betrayal as his duty and doesn't repent); envy towards John (Klopstock; François Mauriac's *Life of Jesus* (1936)); a conspiracy of the Temple priesthood (a recurring motif, particularly in Paul Raynal's *Suffered under Pontius Pilate* (1939)); political ambition (Judas the revolutionary and patriot, disillusioned with Jesus' refusal to build an earthly kingdom, is

[11] Richard Walsh, 'Gospel Judases: Interpreters at Playing Mythic Fields', *Postscripts* 2:1 (2006), pp. 29–46 at p. 43.

the most popular character of the last two centuries) and intellectual pride (e.g. Dorothy L. Sayers' play-cycle The Man Born to be King (1941–2)); predestination as understood in the Gnostic tradition (Marcel Pagnol's tragedy *Judas* (1955), Jorge Luis Borges' essay 'Three Versions of Judas' (1944) and his story *The Sect of Thirty* (1975), Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song* (1980) etc.). The Russian writer Leonid Andreev (*Judas Iskariot* (1909)) combines this Gnostic version with the Russian tradition of the Holy Fool (*iurodstvo*): his Judas is a man of 'a evil repute … covetous, cunning, and inclined to hypocrisy and lying', but Jesus 'in that spirit of serene contradiction, which ever irresistibly inclined Him to the reprobate and unlovable … deliberately accepted Judas, and included him in the circle of the chosen'. Judas loves Jesus with all his heart, betrays his Teacher, blames the rest of the disciples for the betrayal, and then follows Christ in death. However, the artistic revision of Judas reaches its apogee in the Greek writer Nikos Kazantzakis's *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1951): this book was included by the Vatican in the Index Librorum Prohibitorum, while the author was excommunicated by the Greek Orthodox Church for reinventing Christ as subject to doubt and sin, and Judas as the 'conscience of Jesus', the disciple who keeps the Teacher from going astray.

A modern Armenian writer, Mark Aren, in his novel *Requiem for Judas* (2006) develops a detective story: the Gospel of Judas is discovered and then sold to different owners, who are doomed to misfortune or death; he then makes Judas come back to earth and appeal to an Armenian court to rehabilitate him, which evokes severe criticism from the church and, apparently, from the author.

The Eternal Feminine

Artistic revision of the feminine characters followed the same path of, on the one hand, filling biblical gaps of information and moral judgement and, on the other, of rehabilitating the sinners, with a special focus on secondary figures, apocryphal writings and folklore. A legendary Lilith – the so-called first wife of Adam, an ambivalent character, mentioned just once in the Bible and often associated with demons – provoked much more interest than Eve in the nineteenth century (e.g. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Robert Browning, Alfred de Vigny, Victor Hugo, Rémy de Gourmont), and was later rehabilitated (e.g. Anatole France, George MacDonald, Joseph Victor Widmann, Isolde Kurs, George Bernard Shaw).

Sol Liptzin observes that 'of the four biblical matriarchs, Sarah and Rachel attract most attention in world literature. Leah is neglected or given

a very subordinate role, and Rebecca is generally depicted primarily in her beguilement of her husband.'[12] In many writings Sarah is condemned, together with Abraham, for their mistreatment of Hagar, who had a distinguished career in literature (e.g. Isaak da Costa, Mary Tighe, Nathaniel Parker Willis, Irene Forbes-Mosse, Itzik Manger, Rikudah Potash, Lewis Sowden), where she is painted sympathetically, often as a mother exiled to the wilderness with her child Ishmael.

But the leader of the twentieth-century literary revision is certainly Mary Magdalene. 'We will trace here how through the centuries variously ignored, labeled harlot/demoniac/patroness, replaced, appropriated and left behind, conflated, diminished, openly opposed; how she is utilized, unsilenced, rediscovered, resurrected', promises Jane Schaberg in the introduction to her *Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*.[13] In Friedrich Hebbel's 'tragedy of common life' *Mary Magdalene* (1844) the heroine is a victimised figure; in Paul Heyse's *Mary of Magdala* (1903) and Maurice Maeterlinck's *Mary Magdalene* (1910) she is placed between Jesus and a Roman – that is between divine and human love – while later she is reinvented according to Gnostic and other apocryphal writings as a leader, an interpreter of Christ's teachings to the disciples and as Christ's 'consort'. Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1973) popularised a new image of Mary in literature, cinema and arts which gave rise to a whole industry, often based on 'sensational' fictional myths and conspiracy theories with a special focus on Jesus as married to Mary Magdalene (e.g. *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (1982) by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln; *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar: Mary Magdalene and the Holy Grail* (1993) by Margaret Starbird; Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* (2003)).

The New Testament's central female character – the Virgin Mary – is primarily a lyrical image in Marian poetry. Eighteenth-century England, however, hardly contributed to this tradition because of hostility towards 'Popery', while 'in the Romantic poetry of many countries during the nineteenth century … Mary came to glow with a halo that was in some respects no less resplendent than the one with which the unsophisticated piety of the people, the speculations of the theologians, and the liturgy of the church had adorned her'. Wordsworth addressed Mary in *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*: 'Mother! Whose virgin bosom was uncrost/ With the least shade of thought to sin allied'; Pushkin compared his wife to Madonna; Novalis, Mikhail Lermontov

[12] Liptzin, *Biblical Themes in World Literature*, p. 61.
[13] Schaberg, *Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, p. 8.

and many others wrote prayer poems addressed to her, while Goethe in *Faust* created 'the supreme example of the Virgin Mary as an enduring archetype . . . profoundly fascinated by the mystical figure of the Virgin Mary, and especially by her exalted status as Mater Gloriosa and Eternal Feminine'.[14]

Russia seems to have as many Marian poems as icons of the Mother of God. In *Brothers Karamasov* Ivan retells a mediaeval Greek poem, *The Wanderings of Our Lady through Hell*, in which the Virgin Mary falls down before the throne of God and begs for mercy upon all in hell.

> The twentieth-century Virgin is harnessed to political purpose as well. The shielding Mother of God is called on in a patriotic verse by Khlebnikov, Bely and Akhmatova when World War I breaks out; during the war the Virgin appears . . . as succor to the Russian troops. In Pilniak's *The Third Capital* the Mother of God is committed to counterrevolutionary agitation. Later in the century, in his lament *Ave Maria* (1969) Alexandr Galich splices a tale of Soviet interrogation and exile with the image of a drained and heckled Madonna walking though Judea.[15]

A pre-revolutionary socialist transfiguration of Mary is presented by Maxim Gorky in his novel *Mother* (1905).

It is in Russia that religious philosophical ideas about Sophia as Divine Wisdom, known as Sophiology, were developed by Vladimir Soloviev, Pavel Florensky, Sergey Bulgakov and others. These ideas inspired such writers as Alexander Blok, Andrei Bely and Mikhail Bulgakov to create mystical female characters who represent the metaphysics of the Eternal Feminine.

'U-Shaped plot'

Northrop Frye, in his *Words with Power* (1990), considers that the coherence of the Bible's narrative lies in its 'U-Shaped plot'. It begins in the garden in Paradise, is followed by the Fall, and concludes with the final triumph of the ascent to the Celestial City of the New Jerusalem. This plot line may be found in the biblical biographies describing the fall and rise of such people as Joseph, Moses, Ruth, Job, David, Peter and Paul, as well as constituting the framework for a wide range of literary narratives. Frye sees almost any story as that of Paradise Lost as portrayed in Genesis; Frank Kermode in *The Sense of an Ending* emphasises the eschatological story referring to Apocalypse; so the part of the narrative which deals with the restoration of lost harmony, either

[14] Pelikan, *Mary through Centuries*, pp. 165, 168.
[15] De Sherbinin, *Chekhov and Russian Religious Culture*, p. 146.

with the world around or within one's soul, may be seen as an analogy for the biblical salvation story. As Boris Pasternak states in *Doctor Zhivago*, 'art has two constants, two unending concerns: it always meditates on death and thus always creates life. All great, genuine art resembles and continues the Revelation of St John.'

32

The Bible in film

GAYE ORTIZ AND WILLIAM R. TELFORD

Early film and biblical themes

The Bible and the origins of the cinema

The Bible, early cinema and the cultural context

The Bible has been associated with the cinema since its very inception, but that is not surprising. Early cinema, like the cinema of today, told society's stories, promulgated its myths and reflected its cultural values. Audiences flocking to the cheap nickelodeons and primitive movie theatres in early twentieth-century America were not only poor and uneducated but diverse, given the status of that country as an immigrant nation. The Bible, however, was an important part of their cultural heritage. Although the dominant culture was Protestant, waves of Jewish immigrants had also entered America at the turn of the century, and they were not only avid movie-goers but also provided the entrepreneurial expertise to develop the new industry.[1]

The Bible, the cinema and the church

Christianity may have exerted an almost exclusive influence upon the cinema's tradition of religious films, but the attitude of the church to the new medium was ambiguous. On the one hand, while industry leaders saw the new medium, through its presentation of 'the American dream', as promoting understanding of ethnic differences and encouraging the ideology of the 'melting pot', the cinema was seen by the church and its leaders as not only having a detrimental effect on society[2] but also, in the case of films based on the Bible, as misappropriating its stories, myths and rituals for secular ends.[3] On the other hand, the church was quick to see the potential of the new medium for the propagation of its own message and, as a result, many

[1] Pajaczkowska and Curtis, 'Assimilation'.
[2] Wright, 'Moses at the Movies', p. 47.
[3] Musser, 'Passions and the Passion Play', p. 420.

churches and church schools and clubs in this early period showed motion pictures as part of their evangelistic mission.[4]

The attraction of the Bible for film-makers

For early film-makers the Bible lent the new medium, with its somewhat seedy image, an air of respectability. At one level, early films based on the Bible offered glamour, entertainment, excitement and even titillation; but at another they promoted a Judaeo-Christian moral code and the secular values based upon it. The Bible offered a wealth of stories and characters, an abundance of movie tropes (the struggle between good and evil, innocence and guilt, love and hate, retribution and forgiveness, redemption and damnation etc.), exotic locations and settings and sex, intrigue and violence. Christianity, too, had always had a strong visual culture and early film-makers were able to draw upon illustrated versions of the Bible (especially those by Gustave Doré or James Tissot), which provided them with readily available images.[5]

The first cinematic attempts to film the Bible

Passion-Plays

The projection of biblical images on screen was not a new phenomenon for Christian audiences; magic-lantern performances, with their sacred subjects, illustrations of religious paintings and depictions of the passion of Jesus, were a regular feature of church 'entertainment'.[6] One popular subject was the Passion-Play, such as that performed at Oberammergau, and illustrated lectures based on these drew enthusiastic audiences.[7] From there, it was a short step to the filming of such plays, although inevitably there was a tension between the church, with its proprietary interest in such biblical and religious imagery, and the purveyors of popular culture, who wanted to exploit these popular religious images for their own secular (and monetary) ends.

Biblical themes in early movies

Between 1897, when the first one was filmed, and 1912, there were no less than twelve films based on the 'Passion-Play' format.[8] George Méliès' *Le Christ marchant sur les flots* (1899) used trick photography to present Christ

[4] Maltby, '*The King of Kings*', p. 190.
[5] Higashi, *Cecil B. DeMille and American Culture*, p. 180.
[6] Musser, 'Passions and the Passion Play', p. 421.
[7] Musser, 'Passions and the Passion Play', pp. 435–6.
[8] For details see Campbell and Pitts, *The Bible on Film*, pp. 73–80.

walking upon the water, and his *Le juif errant* (1904), with its treatment of the 'wandering' Jew theme, offered a welcome diversion, as did Sidney Olcott's *Ben-Hur* (1907). Other early films treated the birth of Jesus, or New Testament characters such as Salome or Judas, or particular aspects of the Gospel story, such as the raising of Lazarus. In the same period, films based on the Old Testament focused on Samson and Delilah, Daniel, Judith and Holofernes, Moses, David and Goliath, Noah, Saul and David, Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel. The most important, and by far the most successful, of the early films based on the Bible was Sidney Olcott's *From the Manger to the Cross* (1912). Shot on location in the Holy Land and Egypt, it offered audiences a cinematic treatment of the life of Jesus that was not bettered until Cecil B. DeMille's *The King of Kings* (1927). D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916) should also be noted, however, for, although its subject was man's inhumanity to man throughout the ages, it featured sections based on the Old Testament as well as the New.[9] DeMille's *The King of Kings* was the first full-length, silent Hollywood epic on the life of Jesus, as seen from the perspective of Mary Magdalene. Attracting large audiences and fat profits, as well as vociferous criticism from religious leaders for its lurid mix of sex and piety, it demonstrated the growing confidence of a genre that, despite its otherwise conservative treatment of biblical tradition, was not afraid to take liberties with the sacred text.

The biblical epic

The rise of the epic

The Bible, the cinema and Hollywood

With films such as DeMille's *The King of Kings*, the 1920s saw the heyday of the biblical epic, witnessing no less than nine movies based on the Old Testament, and about the same number on the New.[10] Interest in the making of Bible-based films waned in the 1930s and 1940s, but, spurred by competition from television, revived again in the 1950s and 1960s in what was to become the genre's golden age. In decline thereafter, apart from notable exceptions such as *Godspell* (1973), *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1973), *Jesus of Nazareth* (NBC-TV, 1977) and *Jesus/The Public Life of Jesus* (1979) in the 1970s and *King David* (1985) and *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988) in the 1980s, it made a comeback to a degree with Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004).

[9] Louvish, 'Burning Crosses'.
[10] See Campbell and Pitts, *The Bible on Film*, pp. 73–80.

The key players (directors, actors, screenwriters)

Often maligned for their monotony or pietism, or for their vulgarity or eroticism, biblical epics have in fact made an important contribution to the development of the cinema, promoting high production values and showcasing the most recent advances in film technology. They have also attracted the most talented artistes, whether directors of the calibre of D. W. Griffith, Cecil B. DeMille,[11] Nicholas Ray, Pier Paolo Pasolini, George Stevens, Franco Zeffirelli and Martin Scorsese, actors such as Charlton Heston[12] and Max von Sydow, or screenwriters such as Gene Gauntier, Jeanie MacPherson[13] and Paul Schrader.[14]

Jews and Hollywood

Jewish actors, directors, screenwriters and producers have all played major roles in the industry, with archetypal Jewish moguls such as Adolph Zukor, Carl Laemmle, Jack and Harry Warner, Harry Cohn, Samuel Goldwyn, Irving Thalberg and Louis B. Mayer founding and managing film studios and wielding enormous influence. In producing many of the biblical epics, the film-makers faced various conundrums. The Old Testament texts which they produced for mass (predominantly Christian or secular) audiences were stamped with all the ethnic particularities of ancient Judaism, and the New Testament texts, particularly the Gospels, presented disparaging images of Jews and raised the thorny issue of Jewish culpability for the death of Jesus.[15] Assimilation (the American melting pot) was a major part of the film-makers' ideology, and hence their response was to treat the biblical text with reverence, but to decontextualise it in the light of contemporary concerns, playing down its ethnic and particularistic elements in favour of more universal values (such as courage, heroism, liberty, equality, democracy).

The major biblical epics

The Old Testament epic

These elements can be seen in a number of prominent examples within the plethora of epics based on the Old Testament that emerged during the 'golden period': *Samson and Delilah* (1949), *David and Bathsheba* (1951), *The Ten Commandments* (1956), *Adam and Eve* (1956), *Solomon and Sheba* (1959), *Esther*

[11] See Higashi, *Cecil B. DeMille and American Culture*.
[12] See Heston, *In the Arena*.
[13] See Francke, *Script Girls*.
[14] See Jackson (ed.), *Schrader on Schrader* and Schrader, *Transcendental Style*.
[15] Telford, 'The Treatment of Jews'.

and the King (1960), *A Story of David* (1960), *The Story of Ruth* (1960), *Sodom and Gomorrah* (1962) and *The Bible . . . In the Beginning* (1966). Courage and heroism on the part of Jewish warriors, for example, are on display in *Samson and Delilah* and *David and Bathsheba*, films that not coincidentally appeared in the wake of the creation of the state of Israel (1948) and the war of independence. The post–Second World War clash between communism and liberal Western democracy is reflected in *The Ten Commandments*, where Pharaoh and the Egyptians clearly symbolise the former (in this case, Russia) and Moses and the Israelites the latter (in this case, America).[16]

The New Testament, Roman–Christian and other epics

New Testament epics based on the life of Christ posed different problems. Although movie-makers adopted a variety of strategies in dealing with the anti-Semitic elements in the Gospels, charges of anti-Semitism have almost invariably been levelled against each Christ film released. The Roman–Christian epics appearing in the 'golden age', many of them based on successful novels, posed fewer problems (*Quo Vadis* (1951), *Day of Triumph* (1952), *The Robe* (1953), *Demetrius and the Gladiators* (1954), *The Silver Chalice* (1954), *The Big Fisherman* (1959), *Ben-Hur* (1959), *Barabbas* (1962)), the particularity of Christian persecution by the Roman empire being easily transposed into a universal register: the redemptive power of suffering, the spiritual allure of the saviour-figure, the ultimate vindication of persecuted minorities, the triumph of faith over unbelief, etc. Mervyn LeRoy's *Quo Vadis?* (the third version) exploited the legend of Peter's flight from Rome to good effect, and Henry Koster's *The Robe*, the first movie to be filmed in Cinemascope, picked up another legendary motif, exploring the quasi-magical influence of Christ's robe on the Roman centurion responsible for his crucifixion. The best of these films (and a nine Academy Award–winner) is undoubtedly William Wyler's *Ben-Hur*, a spectacular exploring the effect of chance encounters with Christ on Judah Ben-Hur (Charlton Heston) and his family.

Jesus and Christ in Film

Jesus in film

The genre of the Christ film

It is the Christ film itself (or the Jesus movie or biopic), with its direct engagement with the life and death of Jesus, which has proved, perhaps, the most

[16] Babington and Evans, *Biblical Epics*, p. 54.

challenging and controversial of the films based on the Bible. The cinematic Jesus is, in some respects, a more complex figure than the Jesus of the Gospels, for not only is he an amalgam of the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith, but he is, in addition, a figure brought to us in visual rather than purely literary representation. In addition, then, to employing the canonical (as well as the apocryphal) Gospels, Josephus, archaeology, novels offering fictional lives of Christ as their source material (as with the use of Nikos Kazantzakis's novel in Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988)) and even the visions of Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774–1824) (in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004)), film-makers have brought to their task a visual and aural aesthetic which has relied on the classical Christian art of the Renaissance–Baroque period or the Victorian illustrated Bibles of Doré and Tissot, a rich and varied tradition of music and a *mise-en-scène* featuring exotic settings and locations.

Some major Jesus movies

Most Christ films have conformed, in generic terms, to the classic biopic in which the figure of Jesus is treated directly, seriously and with due respect to the original historical context. Some have attempted to cover the complete story (e.g. *From the Manger to the Cross* (1912), *King of Kings* (1961), *The Gospel According to St Matthew* (1964), *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965), *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977), *Jesus/The Public Life of Jesus* (1979)), while others have offered selective and imaginative treatments (e.g. *The King of Kings* (1927), *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988)). A popular focus for selective treatments has been the birth of Jesus (*The Star of Bethlehem* (1908), *The Birth of Jesus* (1909), *Herod and the Newborn King* (1910) or, more recently, *The Nativity Story* (2006)) or his Passion (e.g. *Ecce Homo/Golgotha* (1935), *The Passion of the Christ* (2004)). Some film-makers have concentrated on only one Gospel (e.g. *The Gospel According to St Matthew* (1964), *Jesus/The Public Life of Jesus* (1979), which was based on Luke; *The Gospel of John* (2003)), while others have drawn on all four (e.g. *The Greatest Story Ever Told*). Two have offered the Gospel story in the form of a musical (*Jesus Christ Superstar* (1973) and *Godspell* (1973)), and one has rendered it in animated form (*The Miracle Maker* (2000)). Allegories or Christ-figure movies will be discussed further on, but mention should also be made of the Christ movie spoof *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (1979), which parodies all the conventions of the genre.

Representations of Jesus in the movies

Though based on the Gospels (which themselves offer differing portrayals of Jesus), the biopic Jesus is also a product of the imagination of the film-maker

and the social context of the audience.[17] Cinematic Jesuses reflect the times in which they were produced, and the social, political and religious conditions in which they were conceived. Earlier films tended to present a patriarchal Jesus, a mature, majestic, ethereal, composed and essentially controlled figure, as seen, for example, in *From the Manger to the Cross* (1912), or supremely in that of H. B. Warner in *The King of Kings* (1927). With the removal of restrictions upon the depiction of Christ in the post-war period, and in the light of a developing youth culture, the tendency among film-makers was to present a series of more youthful Jesuses, as exemplified by Jeffrey Hunter's so-called teenage Jesus in *King of Kings* (1961), a pacific figure both beautiful and idealistic. This pacific Christ is also to be seen in Robert Powell's intelligent and reverent portrayal in *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977). Reflecting the revolutionary aspects of the 1960s is Enrique Irazoqui's subversive Jesus in *The Gospel According to St Matthew* (1964), a fierce, unsmiling, angry, ascetic and essentially anti-establishment figure; in contrast is Max von Sydow's strange, otherworldly, mystical and Byzantine Jesus in *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965); and representing the raucous exterior of 1960s and 1970s counter-culture is the energetic, singing and dancing Jesus of *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1973) and *Godspell* (1973). Willem Dafoe's Jesus of *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988) brings us a 'subjective' Christ for the 1980s, a human and sexualised Christ, racked by guilt, a weak individual who only gradually comes to see himself as the Messiah, while Jim Caviezel's Jesus of *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) brings us back once more to a strong, more traditional figure, pitted against Satan as *Christus Victor*, bearing the sins of the world and bringing salvation to the believer with every blow to his tortured flesh.

The Christ-figure in film

The Christ-figure movie genre

Jesus has also made his appearance indirectly in the Christ-figure movies. Such films 'tell stories in which characters, events, or details substantially recall, or resemble, the story of Jesus'.[18] Christ-figures appear principally as redeemers, saviours, or liberators,[19] their Christ-like qualities or salvific actions providing a major theme in the movie or at least as a significant *leitmotiv*.[20] Matters of definition can be problematic – depending on our understanding of the

[17] Telford, 'Jesus Christ Movie-Star'.
[18] Tatum, *Jesus at the Movies*, p. 209.
[19] Malone, *'Edward Scissorhands'*, p. 76.
[20] Baugh, *Imaging the Divine*, p. 110.

Christ of the New Testament, the Christ of Christian faith, or the Christ of Western culture – but the recognition of such figures in film broadens and deepens our understanding of the characters involved, throws light on how society constructs its 'heroes' and attests to the continuing influence of the Christian story in the modern world.

Some major Christ-figure movies

The number of Christ-figures that have been detected by critics in the movies is extensive, as are the genres in which they appear. The following selection, with the identified Christ-figure, gives some example of their ubiquity: *Strange Cargo* (1940; the stranger Cambreau); *Shane* (1953; the gunslinger Shane); *La Strada* (1954; the peasant girl Gelsomina); *On the Waterfront* (1954; the ex-boxer Terry Malloy); *Whistle down the Wind* (1961; the murderer on the run); *Cool Hand Luke* (1967; the convict Luke); *Superman* (1978; Clark Kent/Superman); *ET The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982; ET the extra-terrestrial); *Babette's Feast* (1987; the French refugee Babette Hersant); *Jesus of Montreal* (1989; the actor Daniel Colombe); *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994; the wrongly imprisoned banker Andy Dufresne); *Antonia's Line* (1995; Antonia); *Powder* (1995; the misunderstood teenager Jeremy Reed); *Breaking the Waves* (1996; Bess); *Phenomenon* (1996; the dim-witted mechanic George Malley); *Alien Resurrection* (1997; the astronaut-turned-alien Ripley); and *The Green Mile* (1999; the condemned convict John Coffey).

Representations of the Christ-figure in movies

As with the different cinematic Christs, these ubiquitous Christ-figures come in a variety of forms. Lloyd Baugh has identified types including the saint, the priest, the woman, the extreme Christ-figure (the clown, the fool, the madman) and the outlaw.[21] Reflecting society's interests, values and concerns, people with disabilities but compensating special gifts seem to be prominent among the recent candidates, for example, George Malley in *Phenomenon* (1996). One also discerns much more ambiguity nowadays in our cinematic 'Christ-figures'. Although their redemptive struggle is real, they are no longer models of Nicaean divinity or perfection. Hence, the demented Vietnam veteran Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver* (1976), the obsessive boxer Jake La Motta in *Raging Bull* (1980), and even the avenging ex-convict Max Cady in *Cape Fear* (1991) have been taken as exemplars.[22] Likewise, the alcoholic ex-cop Jericho

[21] Baugh, *Imaging the Divine*, pp. 211–25.
[22] Deacy, *Screen Christologies*, pp. 123, 127–8.

Cane (note his initials) of Peter Hyams's *End of Days* (1999) is a Christ-figure who gives an appearance of being the avenging figure of Revelation, but ends as the 'violence-eschewing Jesus of the Gospels'.[23]

The cinematic appeal of the Apocalypse, the millennium and the Devil

The Church Father Irenaeus (*c.* 130–202 CE) was known for his fervent wish for a literal earthly millennium, and about every thousand years since Christians have been overcome by feverish speculation about the millennium. Films that were released around the time of Y2K (2000 CE) certainly entertained audiences with permutations of the apocalyptic narrative found in the Bible. Rob Johnston writes that these films fell into two categories, those telling stories of a post-apocalyptic world, such as *Waterworld* (1995) and those about events that threaten to bring the world as we know it to an end, such as *Deep Impact*, *Armageddon* (both 1998) and *The Matrix* (1999).[24] The genre of science fiction especially can incite Christian imaginations about apocalyptic possibilities, as in the timely cinematic version of *Left Behind* in 2000.

End of Days (1999) brought Satan into the plot line. Kelly Wyman observes that 'western culture's view of the Devil is remarkably unchanged since pre-Reformation European Christianity', so that when we glimpse him in American films he is recognisable as 'human, as the creator of the Antichrist, as a beast, as a spirit or abstract figure, and also as a comedic hero'.[25]

Neither the end of the world nor the Devil is limited to this most recent millennial period, thanks to classic cinematic masterpieces such as *The Seventh Seal* (1957), *The Exorcist* (1973) and *Rosemary's Baby* (1968). But perhaps, as Brent Plate and Todd Linafelt suggest, film-makers are drawn to the challenge of creating onscreen terrors because these elements of biblical literature are too alluring to be left as mere expressions of language.[26] They point out that almost invariably the doomsday films depict a 'spectacular' end of the world, reflecting a preference for a pessimistic view of the world's future. Film-makers studiously ignore the apocalyptic sense of hope that, Kelton Cobb observes, arises from the 'old apocalyptic form': 'a genre of revelation and judgment that warns people against ruinous ways so as to inspire them through fear of the narrated outcomes to find more responsible ways to live'.[27] One exception might be Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960), with extensive use of

[23] Walsh, 'A Non-American Revelation'.
[24] Johnston, *Reel Spirituality*, p. 168.
[25] Wyman, 'The Devil we Already Know'.
[26] Plate and Linafelt, 'Seeing Beyond the End of the World'.
[27] Cobb, *The Blackwell Guide to Theology*, p. 289.

imagery inspired by the book of Revelation that offers for some an affirmation of hope.

Challenges to cinematic representation of biblical material

Filmic constraints and challenges

Types of biblical references

The representation of the Bible in cinematic form presents a number of problems, not the least of which are those that arise from filmic constraints upon and challenges to biblical material wrested out of its original context. The 'golden age' of the biblical epic passed out of popularity fifty years ago, but Adele Reinhartz writes that 'every year sees growth in the inventory of mainstream commercial films in which the Bible appears, in roles great and small'.[28] Very few of these films retell biblical stories; rather, they feature the Bible in several ways: as a prop, through biblical quotations or allusions; in characters modelled on biblical characters; or through an affinity of the film's narrative with a biblical narrative. The relevance of these biblical references, then, might be limited to viewers who have a working knowledge of the Bible. *Fried Green Tomatoes* (1991) is one film that Reinhartz cites as an example. Its central theme celebrates female friendship, but its meaning is deepened through an allusion to the book of Ruth. Similarly, the desire for an idealised past is the theme of *Pleasantville* (1998), and it corresponds with a biblical desire for Eden as expressed in Exodus, Isaiah and Revelation.[29] Although the intertextuality of the film-watching experience is no doubt deepened for the viewer who recognises these types of references, most film-makers would deny that knowledge of the Bible is necessary in order to enjoy their films!

Cultural and ideological filters

Alice Bach states that our readings (or interpretations) of biblical texts are culturally and ideologically influenced. Film-makers often struggle to erase any evidence of the (contemporary) time in which they are making their films and to seal the film with a veneer of historical verisimilitude. Bach describes the extent of Cecil B. DeMille's endeavour to research the facts surrounding the narrative of the Ten Commandments as well as the details of 'what

[28] Reinhartz, *Scripture on the Silver Screen*, p. 1.
[29] Reinhartz, *Scripture on the Silver Screen*, p. 65.

kind of food Pharaoh ate, what sort of clothes Delilah wore'.[30] Indeed, when faced with the biblical narrative, film-makers are often challenged to fill in certain gaps because of the demands of the visual medium; the obvious lack of a physical description of Jesus in the Gospels, for instance, has led many film-makers to portray him instead as a blond, blue-eyed figure, bowing more to the Hollywood star tradition than to the ancient ethnic–genetic make-up of a Palestinian Jew. And here is one prime challenge for contemporary stars in portraying biblical characters: the images the viewer absorbs mingle in the subconscious to reinforce or confound certain cultural identifications with or stereotypes of mythical biblical figures. This can be seen, as Bach observes, in classic Hollywood biblical epics where all characters were portrayed as 'European-Americans', thus negating a more ethnically accurate representation.[31]

Filmic similarities with biblical texts

Biblical texts may influence popular film in hidden as well as obvious ways, and together the Bible and film may 'contribute to, reinforce, and occasionally challenge norms for thinking about race, gender, colonialism, and sexuality'.[32] The issue of identification is pertinent to how viewers make sense of societal norms and ideals when they interrogate a film in light of the Bible, either identifying or resisting. Erin Runions cites the example of the violence and misogyny displayed in Ezekiel 16 towards Jerusalem (personified as a woman), who is punished by Yahweh for sexual transgressions, a scenario echoed in the plot of *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), where a transgendered woman who defies cultural norms is brutally murdered. Reassessing the cultural and societal forces one faces ideally should include recognition of problematic biblical values.

Religious constraints and challenges

The Catholic Church and the Legion of Decency

The tension between the church's proprietary interest in how the Bible was portrayed cinematically and the film industry's use of popular religious images as money-making ventures existed from the early days of cinema. The Catholic Church was quick to capitalise on the potential of films for promoting the Christian message, becoming heavily involved in the production

[30] Bach, 'Throw them to the Lions, Sire', p. 3.
[31] Bach, 'Throw them to the Lions, Sire', p. 9.
[32] Runions, 'Why Girls Don't Cry', p. 188.

and exhibition of films in Europe in the early twentieth century. Pope Pius XI wrote favourably of film in his 1936 encyclical *Vigilanti Cura*, saying that, with its magnificent power, it must be much more than a light relaxation or diversion. Meanwhile, in the United States, the Legion of Decency was formed to conduct a 'holy crusade' against the abuses of motion pictures in the face of an impotent Production Code issued a few years earlier by the Hays Office.

Brought on by the increase of sex and violence in films, a desperate attempt by studios during the Depression to lure audiences back into the cinema, the Legion's raison d'être was supported by the American public. The threat of 11 million signatures on a boycott pledge was just the opening shot of the Legion, and as the years went on reviews and classifications written by Legion film reviewers in large part influenced Catholic patronage of the cinema. Inevitably a Production Code with teeth led the industry to become self-censoring, and added to the increasing promotion of middle-class values onscreen. These changes led to 'a new moralism and dignity in American cinemas'.[33]

Until the early 1950s the Legion enjoyed widespread support from the American public and grudging respect from the film studios. However, following a long legal battle after it gave the Italian film *The Miracle* (1947) a condemned rating, in 1952 the Supreme Court ruled that motion pictures fell under the guarantee of free speech and a free press upheld by the US Constitution. The Legion of Decency lost its prestigious reputation; its influence further waned due to the social changes that engulfed American culture in the 1960s. In 1965 the Legion became the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures and in 1968 the Production Code was replaced with a ratings system that imposed no moral judgement on films.

Theological constraints and challenges

High versus low Christology

The representation of Jesus in the movies, as previously mentioned, is not without problems. The Christian interpretation of the nature of Christ assumes that he is a divine redeemer as well as a human being, reflecting ancient Apollinarian–Antiochene Christological debates. Christopher Deacy suggests that many Christians are Apollinarian in their Christology when they declare that 'Jesus is God'.[34] Holding these two natures in one has proved

[33] Izod, *Hollywood and the Box Office*, p. 107.
[34] Deacy, *Screen Christologies*, p. 78.

to be a challenge for believers as well as for film-makers. In films such as *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965), Stevens's divine, mystical Jesus is of the Apollinarian tradition, whereas *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988) challenges viewers to consider a truly human Christ of the Antiochene tradition, who suffers without compromise.

Anti-Semitism

Much has been written about the endemic anti-Jewish bias existing through centuries of Christian history. The Catholic Church, beginning with the Vatican document *Nostra Aetate* (1965), has made commendable efforts since to correct the representation of Jews in Catholic history and theology. However, several Hollywood films ignore Jesus' ethnic and religious identity (Jeffrey Hunter in the 1961 *King of Kings* and Max von Sydow in *The Greatest Story Ever Told* were both blond Christs). Critics claim that Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) similarly fails to adequately acknowledge the Jewishness of Jesus: his identity as a Jew, his upbringing and the basis of his moral outlook based upon Judaism.

Extra-canonical sources

A final consideration of the challenges to cinematic representation of biblical material has to do with the consequences film-makers face when they mix their sources. Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* clearly featured an introductory disclaimer that it was based upon Nikos Kazantzakis's novel. Controversy ensued nonetheless because of the power of the visualised image. Mel Gibson claimed that he was 'true to the Gospels' when he made *The Passion of the Christ*, but he used other sources, notably the visions of nineteenth-century mystic Anne Catherine Emmerich. How to ensure the integrity of the biblical text while marrying it with other sources – even a screenwriter's supplementary material – will no doubt ever be a fraught consideration for the film-maker.

33

The Bible in music

TASSILO ERHARDT

The Bible has maintained a close relationship with music since the time its texts were first written. Its beautiful poetry, dramatic stories and powerful imagery have inspired composers and supplied some of them with subjects for immortal works of art. Equally, music, with its ability to interpret, evoke associations and express deep-felt emotions, provided an ideal medium to instil the Bible's messages in the hearts of the faithful and to reach out to those not of the faith.

There are two inherent dangers in this relationship which have been present throughout its history. Music either becomes a means to an end, thereby compromising the artist's creativity, or an end in itself, and stands no longer in the service of the word. It was particularly the latter situation that became an issue in the period after 1750 with the rise of independent freelance composers, the vision of the artist as an elevated, inspired 'genius', and the ever-increasing pressure for originality.

The mid-eighteenth century was marked by the deaths of the major composers of the Baroque period, such as Antonio Vivaldi (1741), Johann Sebastian Bach (1750) and George Frideric Handel (1759). With them also ended the dominant position of sacred music, which had to compete with secular forms in the ensuing Classical, Romantic and Modern periods. Few new musical forms were introduced, and many old ones underwent a steep decline, such as the cantata, the anthem and the motet. Besides an abundance of minor forms, the main carriers of biblical texts remained oratorios and settings of the Passion, to be discussed below. The following paragraphs give an overview of some general trends that can be observed throughout the period after 1750.

During the late eighteenth century sacred music entered public concert platforms and therefore lost its intrinsic bond with the liturgy. This meant on the one hand that liturgical music was performed in concert halls, most famously Johann Sebastian Bach's St Matthew Passion, on the other that new sacred music was written for this non-liturgical purpose. Well-known examples are

Ludwig van Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* (1819–23), Giuseppe Verdi's *Messa da Requiem* (1874), Leoš Janáček's *Glacolitic Mass* (1926–7) and Igor Stravinsky's *Symphonie des psaumes* (1930–1).

Whilst in these works the texts were still sung by choirs or soloists, the same period saw a significant increase of purely instrumental sacred music, in which the texts are not audible, merely serving to inspire the composer. A milestone of this genre was Joseph Haydn's *Musica instrumentale sopra le 7 ultime parole del nostro Redentore in croce* (?1786). Possibly inspired by Haydn's sonatas were Charles Tournemire's *Sept chorals-poèmes d'Orgue pour les sept paroles du Xrist* (1935). Other organ works treating biblical subjects are in Olivier Messiaen's *Livre d'orgue* (1951) and *Livre du Saint Sacrement* (1984), and Marcel Dupré's *Le chemin de la croix* (1931–2).[1] Episodes from the Bible also served as themes for symphonic works such as Jan Meyerowitz's symphony *Midrash Esther* (1956), Fritz Brun's symphonic poem *Aus dem Buche Hiob* (1906) and Ernest Bloch's 'Hebraic rhapsody' *Schelomo* (1915–16).[2]

More obvious biblical sources for instrumental settings were the various dancing characters of the Old Testament, such as David and Jephta. Worthwhile works include Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Le danze del Re David* (1925) for piano and Petr Eben's *Biblical Dances* for organ (1990–3). In particular, Salome dancing inspired many works during the French art nouveau, such as ballet music by Gabriel Pierné (1895), Florent Schmitt (1907) and Alexandr Glazunov (1909). Operas on the subject were written by Richard Strauss (1905) and Antoine Mariotte (1908).

This interest in biblical dance points in the direction of a further distinctive trend of the twentieth century, the setting of biblical themes in combination with other art forms. Works indebted to pictorial art are Ralph Vaughan Williams's 'masque for dancing' *Job* (1930), inspired by William Blake's *Illustrations to the Book of Job*,[3] and Bengt Hambraeus' oratorio *Apocalipsis cum figuris* (1987), based on Albrecht Dürer's series of woodcuts *The Apocalypse*. A conglomeration of various art forms was achieved in the multimedia collage *The Cave* by Steve Reich and his wife, the video artist Beryl Korot: at the centre of the work stands the Cave of Machpela, the burial place of Abraham and his wife, and therefore a holy place for Jews, Muslims and Christians. Underlining the common heritage of these faiths and drawing a connection

[1] B. Hesford, 'Organ Music of our Century: 4. Dupré's *Stations of the Cross*', *The Musical Times* 102/1425 (November 1961), pp. 723–4.
[2] Móricz, 'Sensuous Pagans', pp. 477–88.
[3] O. A. Weltzien, 'Notes and Lineaments: Vaughan Williams's Job: A Masque for *Dancing* and Blake's *Illustrations*', *Musical Quarterly* 76:3 (Autumn 1992), pp. 301–36.

with the present-day Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the text merges passages from Genesis, the Qur'an and contemporary interviews with Israelis, Palestinians and Americans.[4]

In the case of literature, secular works have frequently been used as commentaries on biblical texts. Bernd Alois Zimmermann conveys his deep depression in his *Ekklesiastische Aktion* (1970). Completed five days before the composer's suicide, the oratorio interprets the pessimistic worldview of Ecclesiastes through the cynical words of Dostoevsky's *Grand Inquisitor*.[5] Sergey Prokofiev's ballet music *Bludnīy sīn* (*L'enfant prodigue*; 1928–9) mingled the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) with Alexander Pushkin's *The Station Master*.[6]

Prokofiev's work also serves to illustrate the increasingly cavalier treatment of biblical subjects. For the purpose of choreographic symmetry, the figure of the prodigal son's older brother is left out and two sisters and two friends are introduced. This tendency to change freely and adjust the biblical material has become a distinctive feature in the work of composers and librettists from the late eighteenth century. A well-known example is Handel's oratorio *Jephtha* (1751), in which Jephtha is prevented from carrying out the avowed sacrifice of his daughter by an angel who commands that she should lead a celibate life in the service of the Lord. During the nineteenth century the addition of love relationships became a popular ingredient of drama: in his *Moïse et Pharaon* (1827) Gioachino Rossini inserts a doomed love affair between the fictional characters of Miriam's daughter and Pharaoh's son. In Jules Massenet's *Herodiade* (1882), Salome and John the Baptist feel attracted to one another, Herod's jealousy results in John's beheading, and Salome commits suicide.[7]

Occasionally a brief biblical reference is turned into an elaborate plot. In Charles-François Gounod's opera *La reine de Saba* (1862), the Queen of Sheba's unassuming visit to Solomon is embellished with other biblical characters and woven into an entirely new drama. A love triangle between the queen, Solomon and the Temple architect ends tragically when the latter is killed by his workmen as part of their 'socialist revolution'. In some cases the Bible provides little more than the characters' names in an entirely fictional plot. Nebuchadnezzar in Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Nabucco* (1842) is the only biblical

[4] G. Smith, 'Steve Reich Talking about *The Cave*', *Tempo* (NS) 186 (September 1993), 16–19; R. Cowan, '*The Cave* at the South Bank', *Tempo* (NS) 186 (September 1993), pp. 59–61.
[5] Schmidt, ,"Es ist genug . . ."'.
[6] Hunt, 'Russian Roots: Avant-Garde and Icons'.
[7] 'Massenet's *Hérodiade* and *Manon*', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 25:493 (March 1884), pp. 131–5.

character. Gottfried von Einem's scandalous opera *Jesu Hochzeit* (1980) features a guitar-swinging Mary Magdalene trying to seduce Jesus. In order to save mankind Jesus has to 'marry' the female figure of Death who, in the disguise of Judas Iscariot, takes revenge on him for raising Lazarus.[8]

Such licence in the treatment of the Bible soon elicited, as a counter-movement, a striving for authenticity which some composers found in the lofty tone of ancient languages and earlier musical styles, particularly plainchant and Renaissance polyphony. Jean-François Le Sueur in his oratorio *Debora* (1828) and Franz Liszt in his 'musical will and testament' *Christus* (1866–72) created a religious atmosphere by using Latin and plainchant. Franz Schubert set Psalm 92 in Hebrew (1828); for his German Psalm settings Schubert used Moses Mendelssohn's dynamic translation, which attempted to recapture the feeling and character of the original Hebrew text.[9]

From the end of the nineteenth century composers combined their search for a genuinely religious musical idiom with a reaction to an overly subjective expression of emotion, which they associated with secular music. This resulted in a new objective style, characterised by emotional restraint, and aiming for the universal rather than the individual. In this vein Igor Stravinsky celebrated his reconciliation with the Russian Orthodox Church in his *Symphonie des psaumes*. Using deliberately archaic elements such Latin Psalm texts, church modes and fugal counterpoint, the work exalts the theological virtues of love, hope and faith.[10] In his late masterpiece, *Abraham and Isaac* (1962–3), Stravinsky, inspired by hearing Biblical Hebrew read by Isaiah Berlin, set the text of Genesis 22:1–19 in Hebrew, which held a mystical quality for him. The setting is unemotional and sublime, the narrative recited by a baritone like a synagogue sermon.

In more recent years some composers have sought to give their works the flavour of historical accuracy. For his oratorio *Jesus* (1991) Wolfgang Stockmeier delved into modern historical Jesus research, using only Gospel texts believed to belong to the oldest strand of the tradition. After an extended stay in Israel, Oskar Gottlieb Blarr used Oriental melismatic singing and small intervals in *Jesus-Geburt* (1991), where the Lucan narrative is sung in Greek, and the canticles of the main characters in Aramaic.

In addition, Oriental colouring became fashionable, especially during the nineteenth century, for its exotic and unknown qualities. George Macfarren's

[8] M. Dietrich (ed.), *Pro und Kontra Jesu Hochzeit: Dokumentation eines Opernskandals*, Maske und Kothurn, Supplement 3 (Vienna: Boehlau, 1980).
[9] Brody, 'Schubert and Sulzer Revisited'; Van Hoorickx, 'Schubert and the Bible'.
[10] Copeland, 'The Christian Message'.

oratorio *St John the Baptist* (1873) begins with a trumpet signal imitating the shofar and makes extended use of the augmented second, an interval known for its Oriental connotations. Félicien David used similar orientalisms in his oratorio *Moïse au Sinaï* (1846). Inspired by David, Camille Saint-Saëns created perhaps the most overtly Oriental work of the period, his opera *Samson et Dalila* (1859) in which he employs exotic dance scenes and the Arab *hijāz* mode.[11]

Another modern phenomenon is the use of the Bible in music as political allegory. Although this type of political commentary was not new, composers still found new ways of expressing the concerns of their times through Scripture and music. Darius Milhaud's opera *David* (1952) was commissioned for the 3,000th anniversary of the foundation of Jerusalem. Stravinsky, composing during the Cold War period and under threat of nuclear warfare, understood his dance drama for television *The Flood* (1961–2) as a 'Biblical allegory' for 'the Eternal Catastrophe': '*The Flood* is also *The Bomb*'.[12] Contemporary ecological issues are addressed in Guus Janssen's cynical 'opera off Genesis' *Noach* (1994), in which Noah is opposed by his wife who sides with the doomed innocent animals. Arnold Schönberg's opera fragment *Moses und Aron* (1933) provides a sophisticated commentary on the contemporary Zionist dream of a Jewish state, illustrating the tension between visionary idealism (Moses) and pragmatic realism (Aaron) in achieving this goal.[13]

Schönberg's opera, with its contrasting characters of Moses and Aaron, also exhibits another feature of music since the late nineteenth century: the tendency towards psychological introspection. Equally, in Edward Elgar's biblical oratorios *The Apostles* (1902–3) and *The Kingdom* (1901–3) the emphasis is laid on the motives of the anti-heroes such as Judas Iscariot. The libretto of Rudi Stephan's opera *Die ersten Menschen* (1914) is best described as psychological poetry, treating the matrimonial conflict between Adam and Eve, as well as the sexual intrigues between Cain and Abel who both fall for their mother, the only available woman.[14]

Finally, it should be mentioned that the appearance of new Bible translations had little impact on music. Because of their familiar sound, the traditional versions such as the King James Version, Luther's translation and the Vulgate have remained favourites amongst librettists, composers and their audiences.

[11] Locke, 'Constructing the Oriental "Other"'.
[12] Copeland, 'The Christian Message'.
[13] Lindenberger, 'Arnold Schönberg'.
[14] H. Leichtentritt, 'German Music of the Last Decade', *Musical Quarterly* 10:2 (April 1924), pp. 193–205 at p. 205.

Oratorio

During the eighteenth century oratorio types varied greatly and were determined by national traditions. In Italy, the home of the genre, the vernacular *oratorio volgare* replaced the older *oratorio latino* almost entirely; it was exported to important Catholic cultural centres and continued to flourish throughout the eighteenth century, reaching its climax in Pietro Metastasio's popular libretti *Betulia liberata*, *Isacco figura del Redentore*, *La morte d'Abel*, *Gioas re di Giuda* and *Giuseppe ricognosciuto*.[15]

From the 1770s onwards oratorios began to take a regular place in concert life outside the church. Whilst Catholic oratorio libretti were either biblical or hagiographical, in Lutheran Germany they were exclusively biblical and retained a liturgical function, replacing the earlier cantata. Throughout Germany there was a wide variety of oratorio types, ranging from thoroughly dramatic forms close to opera to contemplative ones with little or no dialogue. Milestones of the dramatic type are Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's *Die Israeliten in der Wüste* (1769) and Georg Philipp Telemann's *Der Tag des Gerichts* (1762).[16] An important influence on the texts of the contemplative oratorio was the poetry of Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, especially his extended epic *Der Messias*. Oratorio texts of this type typically lack dialogue and emphasise sentimental expressions of deep-felt emotion, such as Karl Wilhelm Ramler's *Die Hirten bei der Krippe zu Bethlehem* and *Die Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt Jesu*, which were both set to music numerous times until the early nineteenth century. The tradition of these works is still reflected in the most popular oratorio of the Classical period, Joseph Haydn's *Die Schöpfung* (1798). In the first two sections the creation narrative of Genesis 1 is interspersed with contemplative texts; the third is a free poem in praise of the creation. Opinions about it were divided during Haydn's lifetime. Church authorities in particular were critical of the work.[17] Nonetheless, *Die Schöpfung* became a hugely popular concert piece throughout Europe and North America during the nineteenth century.

In England the legacy of Handel strongly influenced oratorio writing well into the nineteenth century. Handel's most popular biblical oratorios *Judas Maccabaeus*, *Samson* and *Messiah* enjoyed regular performances long after the composer's death, and most newly composed oratorios of the Classical period

[15] Neville, 'Opera or oratorio?'.
[16] H. E. Smither, 'Oratorio', in Macy (ed.), *Grove Music Online*; T. Baumann and J. B. Pyatt, 'Rolle, Johann Heinrich', in Macy (ed.), *Grove Music Online*.
[17] J. Webster, 'Haydn, (Franz) Joseph', in Macy (ed.), *Grove Music Online*; Nohl, *Geistliche Oratorientexte*, pp. 152–3.

are thoroughly Handelian. A little-known, but in its time hugely successful, English oratorio is William Boyce's *Solomon*. First performed in 1742, it received regular performances until the end of the eighteenth century when its erotic language, taken from the Song of Songs, began to clash with 'Bowdlerian' sensibilities.[18]

In France and Italy the traditional oratorio saw a steep decline during the late eighteenth century. The only Italian work from this period with historical significance is Rossini's *Mosè in Egitto* (1818–19), which was conceived as both oratorio and opera, and gained great acclaim at the Paris opera in its French operatic version *Moïse et Pharaon* (1827). In eighteenth-century France the main platform of oratorio performances were the Lenten *concerts spirituels* in Paris. Virtually all texts were written in French, with a distinct predilection for Old Testament subjects such as Jean-Joseph Mondonville's lost *Les Israélites à la montagne d'Horeb*, Giuseppe Cambini's *Le sacrifice d'Isaac* and François-Joseph Gossec's *L'arche d'alliance devant Jérusalem*. As a cultural product of the *ancien régime*, these oratorio performances came to an abrupt end during the French Revolution, after which the genre remained virtually extinct until the 1840s. From 1870 onwards oratorio production in France was once again in full swing with composers such as Berlioz, Saint-Saëns, Bizet, David, Franck, Gounod and Massenet. Their works display a slight preference for Old Testament subjects (e.g. the flood, the Fall, the Promised Land) and traditional figures (e.g. Eve, David, Job, Moses). New Testament oratorios concentrated on the Christmas story, e.g. Reynaldo Hahn's *Pastorale de Noël* (1908) and Gabriel Pierné's *La nuit de Noël de 1870* (1895), in which he treated Christmas as the feast of peace in the context of the Franco-German war of 1870–1.[19]

In England, unlike France and Italy, the oratorio remained one of the most prominent musical genres throughout the Victorian period. The veneration of Handel and his works, particularly *Messiah*, had rendered the oratorio part of the country's national and religious identity. As in the eighteenth century, oratorios expressed 'the sublime', most often in Old Testament stories and frequently in renderings by Milton or Pope. New Testament episodes, such as the Passion, were rarely set to music during this period, partly due to an English reluctance to present Christ as a singing character.[20] Apart from the traditional Lenten oratorios performed in London's theatres, it was mainly the provincial

[18] I. Bartlett, 'Boyce and Early English Oratorio – 2', *Musical Times* 120:1635 (May 1979), pp. 390–1; R. J. Bruce Bartlett, 'William Boyce's *Solomon*', *Music & Letters* 61:1 (January 1980), pp. 28–49 at p. 45.

[19] Massenkeil, *Oratorium und Passion*, vol. II, pp. 209–15.

[20] Massenkeil, *Oratorium und Passion*, vol. II, p. 230.

music festivals that promoted oratorio performances. The pioneering festivals at Birmingham, Norwich and Leeds endorsed the works of international contemporary composers such as Louis Spohr's *The Fall of Babylon* (1839) and Felix Mendelssohn's *St Paul* (1836) and *Elijah* (1846) – in German *Paulus* and *Elias*. The last was an immediate and long-lasting success. With its Old Testament subject and its characteristic arrangement of the libretto it fitted seamlessly into the English oratorio tradition and at the same time displayed characteristics of Bach's style, which was becoming popular in England at the time. *Elijah* set the tone for the English oratorio until the 1870s: topics were almost exclusively drawn from the Old Testament, with a clear preference for the biblical text and omitting the role of a narrator. Works in this style include Michael Costa's *Eli* (1855) and *Naaman* (1864) and Sir William Sterndale Bennett's *The Woman of Samaria* (1867). From about 1870 composers – under the influence of Bach's Matthew Passion – began to return to New Testament subjects and the inclusion of a narrator. Representative examples are Arthur Sullivan's *The Prodigal Son* (1869) and George Macfarren's *St John the Baptist*.

Literary Romanticism in Germany effected an inclination towards mysterious and fantastic subjects. For biblical oratorios this meant a heightened interest in eschatological scenes with apocalyptic texts, such as Spohr's *Das jüngste Gericht* (1812) and *Die letzten Dinge* (1827), Joseph Leopold von Eybler's *Die vier letzten Dinge* (1810) and Friedrich Schneider's *Das Weltgericht* (1919). Similarly, the Romantic fascination with heroic figures of a distant past – paired with the influence of Handel's legacy – produced numerous biblical (predominantly Old Testament) oratorios, among them Schneider's *Gideon* (1829) and *Absalon* (1831). A striking number of compositions were devoted to John the Baptist (e.g. by Joseph Marx, Carl Loewe) and Moses (by Joseph Marx, Rodolfe Kreutzer, Anton Rubinstein and Max Bruch). In the same context, Mendelssohn's milestones *Paulus* and *Elias* were exceedingly popular in their own time. In his correspondence with the librettist of *Elias*, Julius Schubring, he stressed the importance of a life-like portrayal of Old Testament characters.[21] Accordingly, the oratorio depicts Elijah as a fiery preacher and offers psychological insights into the protagonist. A new category of oratorios, although influenced by both Handel's *Messiah* and Klopstock's *Messias*, focused poetically on the person and works of Christ. This included works by Schneider, Sisigmund Neukomm, Felix Draeske, Mendelssohn's fragment *Christus*, and to some extent Liszt's *Christus*.[22] A unique oratorio outside all

[21] Nohl, *Geistliche Oratorientexte*, p. 276.
[22] Massenkeil, *Oratorium und Passion*, vol. II, pp. 124, 145–52.

established traditions is the *opus summum* of Johannes Brahms, *Ein Deutsches Requiem* (1865–8). An expression of agnosticism and resignation rather than faith, and seemingly influenced by Ludwig Feuerbach's humanism, it is no prayer for the dead, but offers comfort for the living who, in the face of death, are confronted with their own mortality.

Towards the end of the century English composers under the influence of Wagner's operas tended to write oratorios in a more dramatic style; examples are Sir Frederic Cowen's *Ruth* (1887), Hubert Parry's *Job* (1892) and Sir Alexander Mackenzie's *The Rose of Sharon* (1884). This tendency culminated in the work of Edward Elgar, a Catholic outsider on the English oratorio scene. His *Dream of Gerontius* on a text by Cardinal Newman set new standards for oratorios, such as his own *The Apostles* (1903) and *The Kingdom* (1906), and William Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* (1931).

New life was blown into Italian oratorios around the turn of the twentieth century by the work of Lorenzo Perosi, who discarded the operatic Italian oratorio and searched for a more authentically sacred idiom by reverting to such things as the narrative forms of Carissimi's oratorios, biblical or liturgical Latin texts, a prominent role for the choir and the use of plainchant. His choice of predominantly New Testament subjects, such as *La risurrezione di Lazzaro*, *La risurrezione di Cristo* (both 1898), *Il natale del Redentore* (1899), *La strage degli innocenti* (1900) and *Il giudizio universale* (1904), is unusual for his time. A similar new impulse was given in France by Olivier Messiaen's *La Transfiguration de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ* (1965–9), which presents the composer's critical reaction to the Second Vatican Council, musically by the use of plainchant recitation, textually by embedding the Gospel narrative into texts of the Roman Catholic liturgy and passages from Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* (all in Latin).[23]

The most representative early twentieth-century Austro-German oratorio is Franz Schmidt's *Das Buch mit sieben Siegeln* (1935–7). After the Second World War the roots of Protestantism were revived in Lutheran Germany, which led to an increase in biblical oratorio production, beginning with Walter Kraft's *Christus* (1945) and including numerous settings of the Annunciation, the Christmas story, the Resurrection and Pentecost.[24]

In general, the twentieth century displayed no clear line in the development of the oratorio, but rather a dissolution of the genre and an intermingling with other forms. With the exception of the 'classic' works by Handel, Haydn

[23] Dingle, '"La statue"'.
[24] Massenkeil, *Oratorium und Passion*, vol. II, p. 278.

and Mendelssohn, the production of sacred oratorios in public concert life slowed down. The general tendency within biblical oratorios was away from Old Testament and towards New Testament subjects with an increasing non-Christian influence. At the same time there were more non-religious oratorios, particularly on political subjects.

Settings of the Passion

Over the centuries the Passion story has taken a number of different musical forms. A distinction between the various types of Passion settings can be made according to the degree in which the biblical text is used in the libretto. In general, there was a movement away from the Gospel text during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the reverse during the twentieth. The purely biblical Passion setting virtually died out during the first half of the eighteenth century, though three other types survived later: the oratorio Passion (e.g. Bach's Passions), which supplements the biblical narrative (usually taken from a single Gospel) with lyrical insertions; the Passion oratorio, which retells the Passion account in free poetic paraphrase; and the entirely non-dramatic, contemplative Passion meditation. The Passion oratorio and the Passion meditation introduced modern textual and musical forms such as recitative and *da capo* arias. Due to reservations about a dramatised, singing Christ, new and often allegorical characters were introduced in order to present lyrical reflections. The most important Passion oratorio libretto of the eighteenth century was Metastasio's *La Passione di Gesù Cristo* (1730), which was set by dozens of Italian and German composers, most famously by Giovanni Paisiello (1783). The Passion meditation is to some degree a conservative and sentimental reaction to the dramatic and sometimes operatic Passion oratorio. The most influential work in Lutheran Germany was Karl Wilhelm Ramler's Passion cantata *Der Tod Jesu*, which gained great popularity in its setting by Carl Heinrich Graun (1755).

The nineteenth century saw a polarisation of Passion settings: on the one hand, there were self-consciously liturgical works, which harked back to liturgical reciting tones and the purely biblical texts, such as Sigismund Neukomm's *Die heilige Leidensgeschichte und die stille Woche* (1841); on the other hand, the Passion story made its way into public concert life, yielding works such as Ludwig van Beethoven's *Christus am Ölberge* (1803). Similarly, Luis Spohr's *Des Heilands letzte Stunden* (1834–5) – known in England as *Calvary* – made numerous changes to the Gospel text by freely expanding episodes and introducing new characters. Spohr's representation of Christ stirred up considerable

controversy with the librettist and the English clergy.[25] This development of Passion meditations for the concert hall was counteracted to some extent by the growing interest in earlier music, and therefore in Passion settings that had been conceived for liturgical use. Perhaps the most influential event in this context was Mendelssohn's revival of Bach's St Matthew Passion (1829). Remarkably, Mendelssohn shortened the work by cutting out numerous arias and chorales, that is, the poetic reflective insertions, thereby making the work significantly more dramatic and biblical than the original.[26] This revival of earlier works in search of a more authentic spirituality was continued in Catholic areas by the Cecilian movement with new editions and performances of passion settings by sixteenth-century masters, and in Lutheran areas through the revival of Heinrich Schütz. Composers sought to recapture the spirit of these works in their own pieces. Perosi's *Trilogia Sacra: La Passione di Cristo secondo S. Marco* (1897) and Heinrich von Herzogenberg's *Die Passion* (1896) are important landmarks in the return to the liturgical setting of Passion music.[27]

The twentieth century saw an increase in Passion settings and a return to the biblical texts. Many composers interpreted the Passion as a mirror of the sufferings of their century. At the same time, they broke with the Romantic tradition by rejecting emotionally convoluted texts and by reaching out for detached and objective musical idioms – particularly *a cappella* choral writing – which they found in the music of the distant past. Notable examples are Kurt Thomas's *Passionsmusik nach dem Evangelisten Markus* (1926), Hugo Distler's *Choral-Passion* (1933), Ernst Pepping's *Passionsbericht des Matthäus* (1949). Frank Martin's *Golgotha* (1945–8) revived the Baroque oratorio Passion, with contemplative insertions taken from Augustine's *Confessiones*. A late example of this detached and objective style is Arvo Pärt's minimalist yet lofty Latin St John Passion (1982/5).

The notable influence of biblical scholarship on music can be detected after 1950, when Mark became widely accepted to be the earliest of the Synoptic Gospels, and simultaneously a significant number of Mark Passions were written, e.g. by Adolf Brunner (1970–1) and Eberhard Wenzel (1967).

In Krzysztof Penderecki's non-liturgical St Luke Passion (1963–6) Jesus' suffering is brought into the context of the Holocaust and the Katyn massacre. In reaction to Penderecki, Gerd Zacher presents his *Lukas-Passion: 700000 Tage später* (1968) as a radical avant-garde contrast to all earlier settings

[25] Stanley, 'Religious Propriety'.
[26] Von Fischer, *Die Passion*, p. 113; Marissen, 'Religious Aims'.
[27] Von Fischer, *Die Passion*, pp. 114–16.

of the Passion. The composer worked out a bare skeleton of mostly verbal instructions, leaving the concrete filling in to the performers, to whom he read passages from the Chilean *Las leyendas del Cristo negro* before every performance.[28] A similar attempt to connect to contemporary issues can be found in Oskar Gottlieb Blarr's *Jesus-Passion* (1985) in which the composer presents a thoroughly Jewish picture of Jesus, leaves out the (in his eyes anti-Jewish) judgement scene, and uses a compilation of passages from the Bible, the Talmud and modern poetry. All biblical texts are in Hebrew; rather than following the Gospel account, Blarr 'reconstructs' Jesus' words on the cross himself (Isa. 53:10; Pss. 22:2, 31:6; Deut. 6:4). Equally, the music combines Western, Jewish and Islamic material.[29]

An isolated case in the field of popular music is the rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar* by Andrew Lloyd Webber (1970). Initially released as a sound recording and later staged and filmed, it was an unprecedented success and set the record for the longest-running musical in London's West End.[30]

This chapter has only scratched the surface of its topic. Much more could be said about the Bible in opera, Mass settings and anthems, not to mention the wealth of minor works which barely fit any given category. Nevertheless, its aim has been to demonstrate some major trends in the musical treatment of the Bible after 1750 and exemplify them by focusing on two main genres, oratorio and Passion. It will have achieved its goal if it prompts music lovers and theologians to investigate more deeply the hermeneutic wealth which music has to offer in its ever-changing relationship to the Bible.

[28] Von Fischer, *Die Passion*, pp. 132–6.
[29] Massenkeil, *Oratorium und Passion*, vol. II, pp. 294–6.
[30] K. Gänzel, 'Lloyd Webber, Andrew', in Macy (ed.), *Grove Music Online*.

34

The Bible in art

MICHAEL WHEELER

For the privileged few who made the Grand Tour in 1750 the phrase 'the Bible in art' would have conjured up the Old Master paintings they admired in private Continental galleries and palaces; for most other people it might have suggested a stained-glass window in the local church or a woodcut in the family bible. By 1875 the range and quantity of biblical illustration – art in the Bible – had risen beyond measure; prints of sacred art had become widely available; and public galleries had come within reach in the age of the train. Today, after 2000, a communications revolution has made digital images – albeit of variable quality – of tens of thousands of paintings and sculptures representing biblical subjects freely available on the Internet, anywhere on the planet: see the list of websites at the end of the reference section.

These changes over a period of 250 years can be described as the democratisation of the Bible in art. In Protestant traditions which regarded 'the Scriptures' as their sole authority, bible production and distribution were central concerns. Although suspect as 'idolatrous' in the eyes of the more extreme Evangelicals, sacred art was legitimised as an aid to faith and to proselytising, particularly during the nineteenth century, when expanding empires were hungry for images of the Holy Land that the historical Jesus had known and that was now for the first time being excavated, analysed, drawn and photographed.

Protestantism, in its many and varied forms, was culturally dominant in the Western world during much of our period, and Roman Catholicism was in various degrees demonised in Protestant countries.[1] Among many half-truths concerning 'Romanism', one stands out: that the Bible was unimportant to lay Catholics, who were instructed to rely on their priests to expound the short passages read out at the mass, and were forbidden to read the Bible for them-

[1] See Michael Wheeler, *The Old Enemies: Catholic and Protestant in English Nineteenth Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

selves. Why, then, was a lavishly illustrated 'Catholic Family Bible' published in 1846–52?[2]

Before considering the mid-nineteenth century – a high point in the history of the Bible in art – we should first consider one of the low points, namely the second half of the eighteenth century. The world's most powerful nations in the 1750s were the old antagonists, France and Britain, already embarked on rival empire-building, while Germany and other countries to the east were struggling towards nationhood. Nationalism led inevitably to a demand for historical paintings, and indeed religious art was regarded in some academies as simply a branch of history painting, occasionally set as the subject for competitions such as the French Prix de Rome, instead of subjects from the history of Greece and Rome.[3]

Of the old school, Giambattista Tiepolo was the last of the great Venetian painters of large-scale religious works, whose Roman Catholic patrons generally asked for (often non-biblical) images of the Virgin and the saints. Tiepolo ended his career working with his sons on the lavish embellishment of the royal palace in Madrid in the 1760s. German religious art of the eighteenth century has been described as having 'competence, charm or dignity', but as 'neither profound in its religious feeling, nor representative of the essentially secular spirit of its age', with the possible exception of South German Rococo.[4] In France, painters such as François Boucher, Jean-Baptiste Deshays, Jean-Baptiste Van Loo, Pierre Restout, and their successor Gabriel-François Doyen, were active in the second half of the eighteenth century, and have in recent years been given rather more serious attention than formerly by art historians.[5] In sharp contrast to the pious prettiness of François Boucher's *Nativity* (1750), William Hogarth's satirical *Credulity, Superstition and Fanaticism* (1762, figure 34.1) shows no bible in the pulpit, and in place of King James's Bible – the Authorised Version – at the foot of the pulpit, under a basket containing a work by the English Methodist evangelist George Whitefield, the large closed book is a copy of King James's *Demonology*.

The description of the Age of Reason as 'not a period of great Biblical illustration'[6] reflects the fact that the sacred art available to engravers was either by

[2] A revised edition, published in parts, is entitled *The Holy Bible, Translated from the Latin Vulgate . . . with Notes and Illustrations, Compiled by the Rev. George Leo Haydock, Embellished with Beautiful Engravings, the Text Carefully Verified, and the Notes Revised, with the Sanction of the Ecclesiastical Dignitaries in Great Britain, by the Very Rev. F. C. Husenbeth, D.D.* (London: Henry, 1852–3).

[3] See Murray and Murray, *Christian Art and Architecture*, p. 351.

[4] Newton and Neil, *The Christian Faith in Art*, p. 220.

[5] Conisbee, *Painting in Eighteenth-Century France*, p. 35.

[6] Bland, *A History of Book Illustration*, p. 212.



Figure 34.1 *Credulity, Superstition and Fanaticism*, 1762 (engraving), William Hogarth (1697–1764) / The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel / Vera & Arturo Schwarz Collection of Dada and Surrealist Art / The Bridgeman Art Library.

the Old Masters or by contemporary painters who produced uninspiring work in imitation of them. Francis Fawkes's *Complete Family Bible*, published in sixty numbers (1761–2), contained seventy full-page illustrations, including a few engravings from the famous Raphael cartoons (1515–16) of tapestries made for the Sistine Chapel in Rome.[7] Most of the other images are highly stylised, portraying statuesque figures either in neutral studio settings – against heavy draperies, for example – or with vaguely drawn suggestions of foreign parts in the background. A version of the woman at the well (John 4:14) shows two Neoclassical figures, one with a glory around his head, in conversation in front of what looks like formal Georgian stonework, with perhaps the trees of a London park in the background.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, the first president of the Royal Academy, declared that the Raphael cartoons were the acme of academic religious art, in his highly influential *Discourses on Art* (1769–90), where he set down the conventions whereby the highest subjects were to be treated in the highest manner. The result was endless 'Raphaelesque' paintings and engravings, encouraged by clerical commentators who admired the cartoons while warning against the dangers of Romanism.[8] The situation in France was not dissimilar, as can be seen in the three hundred mediocre designs by Clément Pierre Marillier in the twelve-volume *Sainte Bible*, published in Paris in the years of the Revolution. For later Victorian commentators who had lived through a quite different period of intense religious activity, the explanation lay in a lack of faith. In the 1890s F. W. Farrar, dean of Canterbury, contrasted the 'meaningless Paganism' of the 'eighteenth-century piles of incongruous statuary' in Westminster Abbey with the 'noble images of dead Crusaders, their hands humbly folded upon their breast': 'The antithesis between the way in which life and death were regarded by an age of belief, however erring, and an age in which scepticism and worldliness were prevalent, is written on the walls and tombs of the Great Abbey in language which all may read.'[9]

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the period of the American and French Revolutions, and of agrarian and industrial revolutions in Britain, there were signs of new life. In France, Jean-Germain Drouais' *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (1782), painted for a church in Paris, 'considered Caravaggio . . . through the eyes of his master David', while Jean-Baptiste Regnault's *The*

[7] The cartoons had been acquired by King Charles I. In 1865 Queen Victoria lent them to the Victoria and Albert Museum, where they remain.

[8] See e.g. Richard Cattermole, *The Book of the Cartoons: The Engravings by Warren* (London: Rickerby, 1837).

[9] Farrar, *The Life of Christ as Represented in Art*, p. vii.

Descent from the Cross (1789) caused a sensation at the Paris Salon, before the expulsion of the priests and the stripping of the cathedrals.[10] The American artist Benjamin West, who was later to achieve worldwide fame for his large-scale biblical paintings, produced works such as *The Raising of Lazarus* (1780) for Winchester Cathedral and *Sts Peter and John Running towards the Sepulchre* (*c.* 1782). In London a radical engraver called William Blake contributed plates to *The Protestant's Family Bible* (1780); and in Worcester, Massachusetts, Isaiah Thomas published the first illustrated folio bible in America (1791), celebrating the nation's newly won freedom from British copyright laws by printing the 'King James' version, and incorporating fifty copperplate illustrations by American artists and engravers. All these works retain a strong sense of tradition, however: West's paintings are Raphaelesque; Blake's plates include two based upon works by Raphael; and both *The Protestant's Family Bible* and Thomas's bible include a chronology which begins with the creation of the world in 4004 BCE.

Isaiah Thomas's patriotic effort in publishing his American Bible of 1791 was matched nine years later by Thomas Macklin, whose magnificent eight-volume bible was 'embellished with engravings, from pictures and designs by the most eminent English artists'.[11] 'English' here includes not only home-grown artists such as Thomas Stothard, but also Philip James de Loutherbourg (born in Basel, trained in Paris and settled in London since 1771), and West (who settled in 1763). The popularity of newly available prints and woodcuts of Old Master paintings was reflected in a phenomenon known as 'grangerising', whereby reproductions would be collected and tipped into works such as Macklin's bible, Robert Bowyer's copy of which, re-bound in forty-five volumes, eventually contained 6,293 different images of biblical events, costing some £4,000.[12]

Meanwhile, violent revolutionary events in Europe and America were being read by many Protestants as 'signs of the times'. Popular millenarianism flourished, and artists chose as their subjects biblical passages in which divine judgement is meted out through some kind of cataclysmic event, as in West's *The Deluge* (1790–1803) and J. M. W. Turner's works of the first decade of the new century, such as *The Destruction of Sodom*, *The Fifth Plague of Egypt*, *The Tenth Plague of Egypt* and *The Deluge*. West exploited the popular success of his later works, such as *Christ Rejected* (1814), by exhibiting them in his own gallery,

[10] Conisbee, *Painting in Eighteenth-Century France*, p. 68.
[11] The eighth volume appeared in 1816.
[12] See de Hamel, *The Book*, p. 257.

encouraging explanatory booklets to be prepared, and having them engraved for multiple sales. Among them was the apocalyptic *Death on the Pale Horse* (1817), on which William Carey wrote a tract that was 172 pages long.[13]

John Martin achieved even greater popular acclaim with his huge melodramatic pictures on Old Testament subjects that anticipate the Hollywood biblical epics of the 1930s. In 1816 his *Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still upon Gibeon* caused a sensation which was surpassed three years later by the frenzy over *The Fall of Babylon*, with its carefully researched architectural details. William Beckford went to see it at the British Institution three times, describing it as 'a sublime thing'.[14] *Belshazzar's Feast* followed (1821), and again the public flocked to see Martin's latest populist blockbuster. Five years later this painting was the subject of his first large mezzotint, over which he took great pains: the printing of the complete edition of *The Deluge* (1828) took eleven weeks.

In sharp contrast to these oversized Protestant visual sermons in London, a conservative Catholic movement of German origin had developed in Rome. When Johann Friedrich Overbeck and Franz Pforr expressed their frustration with the teaching at the Vienna Academy by founding the Brotherhood of St Luke in 1809 and the following year went to Rome, forming the group later mockingly dubbed the Nazarenes, their aim was not to overthrow the traditions of religious art but rather to revive them, and to achieve this by basing their work on Albrecht Dürer, Pietro Perugino, and (pre-Roman) Raphael. Overbeck, the most influential member of the group, was to convert to Roman Catholicism. Indeed, even before his conversion he expressed a preference for the Adoration of the Magi, a subject which was more central to Roman Catholic tradition than to Protestant readings of the nativity narrative.[15] In Franz Pforr's paintings 'purity is signified through stylization, namely an emphasis on linearity and a conscious omission of chiarascuro, in imitation of Old German painting'.[16]

Back in Germany, Peter von Cornelius and Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld put the Nazarenes and their aims on an official educational footing. But their work was disseminated most effectively through illustrated bibles and books designed for family worship, in which they figured prominently, not least because the sharpness of line in the original paintings translated well

[13] See von Erffa and Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West*, pp. 146–7.
[14] See Johnstone, *John Martin*, p. 51.
[15] See Frank, *German Romantic Painting Redefined*, pp. 56–7. Overbeck painted his *Adoration of the Magi* between 1811 and 1813.
[16] Frank, *German Romantic Painting Redefined*, p. 93.

in the hands of the engraver. In England, where all things German were to flourish after Queen Victoria's marriage to Prince Albert, and where there was a German gallery in Old Bond Street, Victorian editions of John Brown's popular *Self-Interpreting Bible* (*c*. 1844) contained numerous Nazarene images.

A similar but much less well-documented movement in France, known as French Pre-Raphaelitism, developed in the 1830s, and was characterised by a 'hieratic' style of figure painting, defined by *Larousse* as one 'that has a nearly religious solemnity, majesty and ritual stiffness'.[17] This movement reflected the principles of ultramontanism in France, with its emphasis upon authority, tradition and social stratification in the aftermath of recent tumultuous events, and its repulsion from any art that could be regarded as an example of 'naturalism', which conservatives associated with progressive social models. Like the so-called battle of the styles between classical and Gothic architecture, and the conflicting claims of the 'novel' and 'romance' in fiction of the period, this ideological polarisation was the product of contemporary debates concerning order and disorder in post-revolutionary Europe and America.

In Britain it was the Scottish artist William Dyce whose work offered the closest parallels with the Nazarenes. A kind of 'corresponding member' of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Dyce produced some of the most memorable and intimate paintings of biblical subjects of the century, often coming close to what might be called sacred genre painting. The strikingly posed *Joash Shooting the Arrow of Deliverance* (1844), now housed in a German gallery, is less characteristic in this sense than his touching treatment of *St John Leading the Blessed Virgin from the Tomb* (1844).[18]

The best-known and perhaps most important development in the treatment of the Bible of art in our period, however, was the English Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood itself, founded in 1848 by a group of young and ambitious rebels against their Royal Academy art education in London. Of the seven members, the most significant were William Holman-Hunt (aged twenty-one), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (twenty) and John Everett Millais (only nineteen).[19] Rossetti's *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* – technically a non-biblical subject – was shown in the Free Exhibition of 1849 and bore the mysterious initials 'P.R.B.'. The oil paint is thinly applied, so that every tint is transparent, as in the frescoes of the early Italians, or 'primitives' as Charles Eastlake called them, and the picture's elaborate iconography draws upon the Roman Catholicism of Rossetti's

[17] See Driskel, *Representing Belief*, pp. 4–5.
[18] See Wheeler, *St John and the Victorians*, pp. 179–81.
[19] The others were F. G. Stephens, Thomas Woolner, James Collinson and William Michael Rossetti.



Figure 34.2 *Christ in the House of His Parents ('The Carpenter's Shop')*, 1849–50, Sir John Everett Millais, Bt (1829–1896) / Photo ©Tate, London 2013.

forebears and the Anglo-Catholicism of his sister Christina and his mother. A year before the highly controversial restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in England, known as 'Papal Aggression', such a work was highly suspect, as was Rossetti's *Ecce Ancilla Domini!*, exhibited in 1850.

It was Millais' *Christ in the House of His Parents (The Carpenter's Shop)*, however, which caused the greatest furore, in the Academy summer exhibition of 1850 (figure 34.2). Tractarianism, regarded by most people as the enemy within and thus even more sinister than Roman Catholicism, seemed to be behind the eucharistic arrangement of the workbench and the figures around it, while the separation of the sheep reflected a Tractarian emphasis upon separating the congregation from the sacred ministers in church. Dickens's famous attack on the picture, in which he described Millais' young Jesus as 'a hideous, wry-necked, blubbering, red-haired boy in a nightgown, who appears to have received a poke playing in an adjacent gutter', reflected the Broad Church novelist's own idealised and Raphaelesque mental picture of the Holy Family.

John Ruskin, the leading art critic of the day, was asked to defend the Brotherhood against such attacks. While stating his dislike of their 'Romanist and Tractarian tendencies', he implored the British public to give these brilliant if presumptuous young artists a fair chance. Of several letters that Ruskin wrote to *The Times*, the most significant was that in which he explained in great detail the symbolism in Holman-Hunt's *The Light of the World* (1854), a

picture which had been largely ignored or misunderstood at that summer's Academy exhibition. Having reminded readers of the text from Revelation 3:20, inscribed on the frame, he explained that Christ's robes bespeak his 'everlasting offices of prophet, priest, and king', and stated that for him this was 'one of the very noblest works of sacred art ever produced in this or any other age'.[20] William Henry Simmons's engraving of the painting (1860) was to hang in tens of thousands of parish halls and homes of the devout, and a later version of the painting toured the empire in the early years of the twentieth century before settling at St Paul's Cathedral in London, reinforcing the picture's status as Protestantism's most important icon.

Whereas Ruskin could praise to the skies Holman-Hunt's portrayal of the risen Christ in an English orchard – Christ with us – he felt that Holman-Hunt's tours of the Holy Land were a mistake, as they diverted a painter already obsessed with detail into an attempt to reconstruct the world in which the historical Jesus lived. Hence Ruskin's muted response to Holman-Hunt's *The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple* (1860). It was precisely this kind of historicist and realist effort, however, that was in the view of A. G. Temple the main contribution of those modern artists who produced sacred art in the second half of the nineteenth century.[21]

Bible illustrations and engraved views of the Holy Land led the way in this respect. Holman-Hunt's source for the sacerdotal breastplate (Exodus 28) in *The Light of the World*, for example, was the richly illustrated Pictorial Bible which inspired so much of his work.[22] Knight's famous bible was first published in three volumes in 1836–8, illustrated with 'many hundred wood-cuts'. A revised 'Standard Edition' appeared in 1847–9 in four volumes, 'illustrated with steel engravings, after celebrated pictures, and many hundred wood-cuts, representing the landscape scenes, from original drawings, or from authentic engravings, and the subjects of natural history, costume, and antiquities, from the best sources'. Machine-printing had 'lowered the standards of taste and workmanship', but the book was no doubt cheaper.[23] Less cheap was

[20] Ruskin, *Works*, vol. XII, pp. 329–30.

[21] 'In modern times, during the past fifty years or so, the effort has been pronounced to depict Scriptural events as nearly as possible as they actually occurred, studious regard being paid to the probable facial aspect of the men or women represented, and to the garb worn, as well as the incidents of landscape and architectural details, where these have been introduced. It is this last and acceptable phase of Sacred Art, with its realistic and, in many cases, impressive teaching, which has been, as far as possible, put forward in this work': Temple (ed.), *Sacred Art*, p. vi.

[22] See Michael Wheeler, *Ruskin's God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 112.

[23] Black, 'The Printed Bible', p. 467.

David Roberts's monumental *The Holy Land*, published in five lavish volumes (1842–9). As was usual in such books, a leading clergyman supplied a commentary, of which the Reverend George Croly's pious words on Roberts's *General View of Nazareth* were fairly typical: 'Generations pass away, and the noblest monuments of the hand of man follow them; but the hills, the valley, and the stream exist, on which the eye of the Lord of all gazed; the soil on which His sacred footsteps trod.'[24] *Cassell's Illustrated Family Bible* (1859–63), which sold 350,000 copies in six years,[25] included illustrations by a new generation of engravers who 'Orientalised' their subjects, and work by artists such as Gustave Doré, who responded to the growth in historical and scientific knowledge.[26] Doré's illustrated bible, also published by Cassell in sixty-four parts (1866–70), included a depiction of the wedding at Cana (John 2) taking place out of doors, under an authentic Middle Eastern awning which protects the guests from the sun.[27] This bible made Doré so famous that he was able to sell his religious paintings in his own gallery in Bond Street.[28]

Historicist realism is more obvious in treatments of Old Testament subjects than New, not least because German theologians such as D. F. Strauss and Ernest Renan had questioned the historical veracity of the New Testament. So the Christ figure generally remained bearded, long haired and classically dressed – the Christ of pictorial tradition.[29] French naturalism, however, opened up new possibilities. Théodule Ribot's *Jésus au milieu des docteurs* (1866), for example, in which the Christ child is depicted as an 'enfant du Peuple' surrounded by coarse figures in rough garments, has been related to the impact of Renan and a 'brave new belief in progress'.[30] Renan himself felt that the time was right in 1870 to publish an illustrated edition of his *Vie de Jésus*, in which Godefroy Durand depicts Christ wearing the same simple dress as the apostles at the Last Supper, sitting with them on the floor in Oriental

[24] David Roberts, *The Holy Land, Syria, Idumea, Arabia, Egypt, & Nubia, from drawings made on the spot by David Roberts, R.A., with historical descriptions by the Revd George Croly … lithographed by Louis Haghe*, 5 vols. in 1 (London: Studio Editions, 1989), vol. II, p. 14. Cf. e.g. Edward Francis and William Finden, *Landscape illustrations of the Bible, consisting of views of the most remarkable places mentioned in the Old and New Testaments, from original sketches taken on the spot, engraved by W. and E. Finden, with descriptions by the Rev. Thomas Hartwell Horne*, ed. Charles Newton, 2 vols. (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1998–9 (reprint) [1836]).

[25] Altick, *English Common Reader*, p. 303.

[26] See Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, p. 141.

[27] See Wheeler, *St John and the Victorians*, pp. 101–3.

[28] See Bland, *A History of Book Illustration*, p. 290.

[29] See Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible*, p. 141.

[30] See Driskel, *Representing Belief*, pp. 166–9.

fashion and enacting 'a daily ritual of the table in Jewish households, blessing the bread'.[31]

Other more sensational kinds of historical painting achieved the kind of popular appeal that Hollywood was to provide in the following century. Edward John Poynter's *Israelites in Egypt* (1867), for example, was based on the first chapter of Exodus, and although densely documented, much of the detail bore little relation to reality. Poynter drew eclectically from the architecture of different cities, and the massive sculptures in the painting were based upon a variety of sources of quite different periods in the British Museum. Some critics disapproved of Poynter's disregard for archaeological accuracy, and when the purchaser of the painting, a distinguished civil engineer, pointed out that more Israelite slaves would have been required to move such a huge granite sculpture as that shown in the foreground, Poynter obligingly added more slaves.

Pierre Puvis de Chavannes' *The Beheading of St John the Baptist* (*c*. 1869), of which there are two versions,[32] reflects not only the artist's personal obsession with beheading and his nation's post-Revolutionary attention to the subject, but also an interest in Salome (Matthew 14), the *femme fatale* who was to fascinate the artists and writers of the Decadence, such as Stéphane Mallarmé, Oscar Wilde and Richard Strauss, and most arrestingly Gustave Moreau in his hugely influential *Salomé dansant devant Hérode* (1876).

Although utterly different from Moreau's luxurious *Salomé* in style, Paul Gaugin's *Le Christ jaune* (1889, figure 34.3) was equally ground-breaking, turning as it did 'the old realism into the new symbolism'.[33] The primitive portrayal of the crucified Christ in a peasant setting through the use of 'Cloisonnist' blocks of colour, without subtle shading and separated by strong dark lines, drew upon folk art and Japanese tradition. The flatness of the forms and the pictorial field were 'characteristics of a symbolist pictorial idiom that evolved during the 1880s in reaction to the naturalist movement's materialist worldview'.[34] Gaugin's choice of subject matter foregrounded the painting's revisionary qualities, although representations of the crucifixion had in fact been much scarcer in the nineteenth century than in medieval and Renaissance Europe.

[31] Driskel, *Representing Belief*, p. 202. Similarly, Durand's crucifixion scene 'denies any dramatic or heroic dimension to the event, presenting it as an ugly fact of life in the barbaric past of the Near East', p. 203. Cf. Léon Bonnat's *La Crucifixion* (1874).

[32] In the National Gallery, London, and the Barber Institute, Birmingham.

[33] Newton and Neil, *The Christian Faith in Art*, p. 272.

[34] Driskel, *Representing Belief*, p. 15.

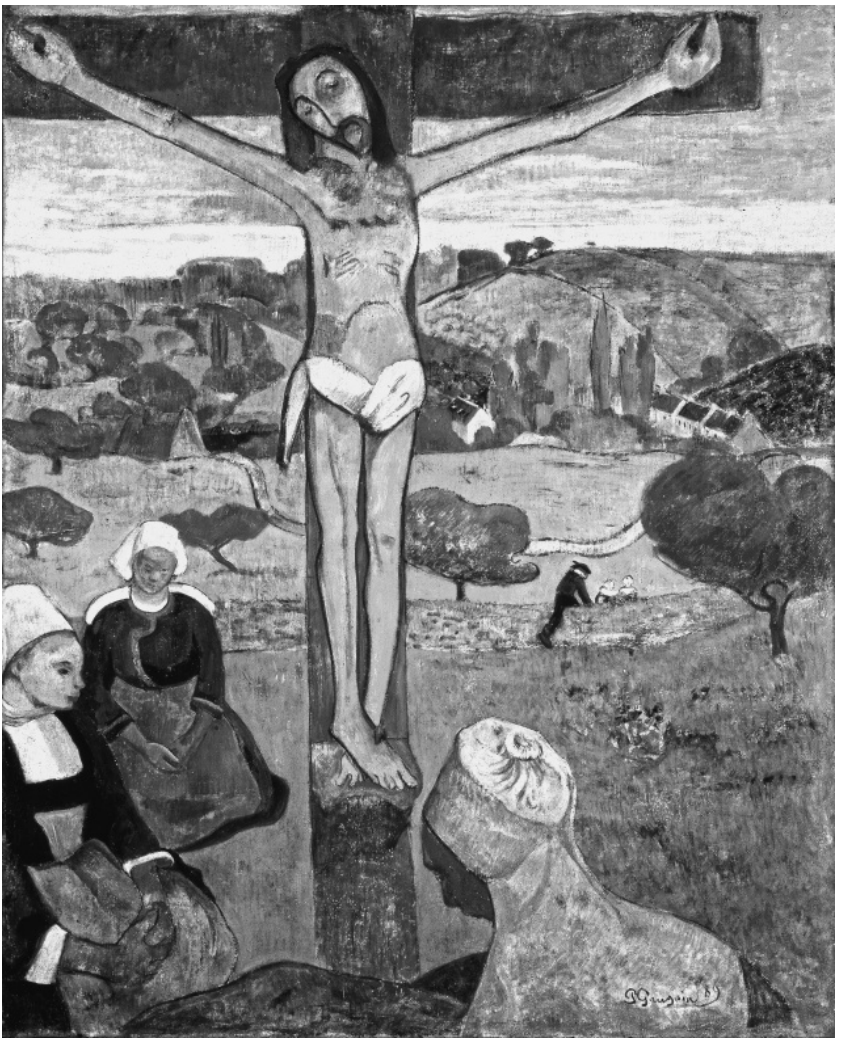


Figure 34.3 *The Yellow Christ*, 1889, Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) / Albright-Knox Art Gallery / Art Resource, NY.

Christ's Passion reclaimed its place as the principal biblical subject in art in the twentieth century, a century not only of huge technological, scientific and medical advances, but also of two world wars. The darkness of the Great War penetrated George Roualt's crucifixion scenes of the 1920s, in a remarkable sequence of aquatints entitled *Miserere*, which for complex reasons remained unpublished until 1948. Yet a work such as *Aimez-vous les uns les autres (Love*

One Another) (1923), with its traditional grouping of the Virgin Mary, John the Evangelist and Mary Magdalene at the foot of the cross, offered an answer to those who asked where God was in the terrible suffering associated with the war.

Whereas in the nineteenth century Christian commentators had been doing theology on Dover beach, in the twentieth century they faced the awesome task of doing theology at Auschwitz. Marc Chagall's *White Crucifixion* (1938), in which Christ's traditional loincloth was replaced by a Jewish prayer shawl, and the surrounding action transformed into the events of *Kristallnacht*, is often cited as a 'classic Christian work of the twentieth century'.[35] For a Jewish painter to use the central symbol of Christianity in such an international and interfaith work spoke to a generation which was grappling with new horrors that resulted from rampant nationalism.

An alternative response to the nightmares of the first half of the twentieth century was a revival in reassuringly traditional techniques, particularly in bible illustration. In England, for example, wood engraving revived in the hands of Gertrude Hermes and Blair Hughes-Stanton, who used ancient methods in a modern idiom.[36] Eric Gill's *Annunciation* (*c*. 1912) referred to Rossetti's *Ecce Ancilla Domini!*, which itself drew inspiration from stylised medieval art. In *The Four Gospels*, published by the Golden Cockerell Press in 1931, Gill's crowning achievement is to create a printed book which puts one in mind of an illuminated manuscript. Similarly, if the 'grand narrative' of the Judaeo-Christian tradition – Milton's subject in *Paradise Lost* – was inaccessible to artists working in a fragmented world, vernacular subject matter such as Stanley Spencer's in his visions of Cookham in England suggested new ways of interpreting biblical stories.

Whereas in the nineteenth century missionary activity was supported by exported European sacred art, in the form of illustrated bibles and engravings, in the later twentieth century home-grown traditions of Christian art developed throughout the world, reflecting in the range of their art forms something of the energy of new churches and traditions. The Bible itself ('Tusi Paia') is portrayed flanked by blue candles and pink hibiscus flowers in a plaited mat from Western Samoa made of palm leaf (1994).[37] Rowena Loverance records that a 'lively school of Chinese art has developed in Nanjing, incorporating traditional Chinese techniques of watercolour, calligraphy, woodcuts

[35] Loverance, *Christian Art*, p. 16.
[36] Hughes-Stanton's *Revelation of St John* was published in 1932 and his *Lamentations of Jeremiah* in 1933. See Bland, *A History of Book Illustration*, p. 369.
[37] Loverance, *Christian Art*, p. 20.

and papercuts'.[38] Japan's Expo 1970 Fair at Osaka included a Christian pavilion, and the work of Sadao Watanabe, who died in 1996, has gained international recognition. Indian artists of similar stature emerged after independence, and African artists working in non-traditional art forms such as printmaking have made their own statements of Christian faith. Yet in Brazil, where there has been the most rapid expansion of Protestant, largely Pentecostal sects, there has yet to develop a distinctive visual style.[39]

Back in modern Britain, one of the last examples of the Bible in art in the twentieth century reflected in its irony the postmodern secularism of the developed West. Damien Hirst's thirteen screenprints entitled *The Last Supper* were released in 1999. Drawing upon the pop art tradition of Andy Warhol, Hirst played with the idea of the commodification of religion in a series of labels for foodstuffs that might have made up a modern last supper. The democratisation of the Bible in art was complete.

[38] Loverance, *Christian Art*, p. 51.
[39] Loverance, *Christian Art*, p. 53.

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The Bible and science

NICOLAAS A. RUPKE

Discourses of Bible and science

Hundreds of books and pamphlets and thousands of articles dealing with the combination Bible and science have appeared during the period covered by this chapter. The reason for this copious output of literature is that scientists, theologians and laymen alike have constructed various relationships between biblical texts and modern science, and that the nature of these has proved highly contentious. The issue at stake has been, putting it in black and white, whether the Bible is a divinely inspired, inerrant and unique source of physical as well as moral truth; or whether it is not, containing unscientific and other absurdities. Titles of the many publications include such variations on the theme of Bible and science as 'Scripture and science', 'Bible and nature', 'Bible and astronomy', 'Genesis and geology' and 'Moses and Darwin'.

The majority of the authors who write about the Bible and science also take sides in the controversy over the nature of the relationship. Scholarship that does not participate in the debates but primarily explores the history of the relationship dates by and large from the post–Second World War period, and even then has been thin on the ground.[1] Accordingly, the historiographical models canvassed to give structure to the relationship between Bible and science have tended to reflect the partisanship of their propounders. Both harmony and warfare models have been put forward. In recent years a so-called complexity thesis has been advanced which states that Bible-and-science should not be reduced to a common denominator of either a good or a bad relationship but must be seen in the multifariousness of the different times and places of its making. Talk is of encounters and engagement between the two, less of conflict.[2]

[1] For a recent set of contributions see van der Meer and Mandelbrote (eds.), *Interpreting Nature and Scripture.*

[2] Representative is Ferngren (ed.), *Science and Religion*.

In broad agreement with, and further development of, the complexity thesis, I here document the history of the relationship between the Bible and science as a story of multiple discourses that have existed alongside each other during much of the period of this chapter. 'Discourse' is used here in a social theory sense, denoting more than extended speech or writing, namely a coherent set of contentions that generates its own regime of validity inside a particular constituency with distinct socio-political values. The multiple-discourses approach avoids painting an oversimplified picture of the relationship between Bible and science, which relationship, as I document below, cannot be resolved into two polar opposites of cognition – the one of religious conviction, the other of natural knowledge; nor can it be reduced to two competing professions – the one theology, the other science. The history of Bible and science between 1750 and 2000 has been driven less by the encounter between theologians and scientists, or their respective beliefs and fields of expertise, than by competing discourses about the Bible–science copula, each discourse conducted by groups that count theologians and scientists among their own. A narrative of competing, parallel developing discourses also escapes the oversimplication of a single, privileged trajectory of historical advancement and more adequately captures the rich diversity of the literature on the subject than any bipolar harmony or conflict model can do. Moreover, it shows where conflict has been located, which is less between Scripture and science than between the different discourse constituencies.

Some five discourses can be recognised, each identifiable by a particular hermeneutic strategy in dealing with the Bible and science.

1. The Bible is divinely inspired, literally true and the textual passages that deal with the natural world are imperatively valid for science.
2. Apparent discrepancies between Bible and science disappear if we interpret certain biblical texts the right way, in many places not in a literal but a figurative sense.
3. Bible and science do not clash, because they share no common ground but have separate spheres of validity, the one of moral conduct, the other of physical reality.
4. The Bible and science are fellow travellers who conduct a dialogue in which each informs the other by addressing the same reality but from a different point of view.
5. The Bible is a rag-bag of antiquated stories and in part harmful notions from which science sets us free.

These five interpretations, in addition to having different religious and socio-political anchoring grounds, also have fastened onto characteristic sets of

contentious biblical texts and scientific theories, although overlaps between the sets exist.

Changing boundaries

The pertinent criticisms of the Bible are many and varied, and as early as the middle of the eighteenth century added up to a familiar canon of examples. During the past 250 years the number of points of contention in Scripture have changed little, few if any new biblical passages having been added to the tally of allegedly reason- and science-defying instances. By 1750 a major encyclopaedic apologia started its thirty-two-year publishing history, addressing countless attacks on the Bible and defending its rationality and divinely inspired truth. The sixteen-volume work, *Die gute Sache der Offenbarung* (1750–82), was written by the Lutheran professor of theology at the University of Königsberg, Theodor Christoph Lilienthal (1717–81), honoured upon his death by his colleague Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) with an affectionate lament (*Trauergedicht*).

Lilienthal, who was an ardent anti-deist in the Wolffian tradition of Halle University, primarily engaged with the English deists of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (Charles Blount, Matthew Tindal, Thomas Woolston, Thomas Morgan, Viscount Bolingbroke, John Leland and also the French Spinozist Simon Tyssot de Patot). Examples of contentious biblical stories that are pertinent to the workings of the natural world – some already discussed at the time of the Church Fathers, for instance by Augustine – ranged from the creation account and Noah's deluge, via the plagues of Egypt, Joshua's Long Day and Jonah and the whale, to the New Testament miracles surrounding Christ, in particular the Virgin Birth and Resurrection. Lilienthal insisted that biblical miracles are historical; some had involved supernatural divine action, others had taken place by means of natural processes.

Even though the number of contentious points has changed little, the engagement between the Bible and science has been marked by moving flashpoints, and the boundaries between them have repeatedly shifted. In part this has been due to the fact that 'Bible' and 'science' are not static entities but have acquired new meaning and, in the case of science, also new content. Biblical and archaeological scholarship have led to novel understandings of the literary character of, for example, the first chapters of Genesis, greatly influencing hermeneutical approaches. Science has undergone – and continues to undergo – more extraordinary changes yet, showing an exponential growth of practitioners and texts, and a never-ending rejuvenation of theories and cognitive paradigms. In 1750 the very concept and, with it, the term 'science' was

still unknown, and many 'natural philosophers' regarded the Bible as a source of knowledge of the physical world, witness contemporaneous sacred geographies (Willem Albert Bachiene) and the persistent use of sacred chronologies (William Hales). In the process, natural philosophers adopted biblical language and notions of paradise, of Adam and Eve, of Noah and the deluge, and Baconians, Hutchinsonians and Newtonians confidently continued to invest Bible passages with their scientific theories. Subsequent professionalisation of the study of nature caused a breakdown of this 'Baconian compromise',[3] and sacred knowledge was filtered out of mainstream science.

The dynamic interactions are well illustrated by the controversy over pre-adamism.[4] The claim by the French Huguenot Isaac la Peyrère (1596–1696) of pre-adamic humans – that Adam was not the first human being but the first Jew – formed an early chapter in the history of Bible scepticism. Lilienthal, and many apologetes since, saw the supposition of an inhabited world before Adam as an assault on the veracity of the Genesis story. The dispute went through different configurations, reflecting changes in both biblical hermeneutics and science. During much of the eighteenth century language was central to debates about human origins, but through the nineteenth century physical anthropology and palaeo-anthropology became pivotal. In spite of the heterodox beginnings of pre-adamism, it 'later came to reside among religious conservatives'[5] who attempted to harmonise the Bible with the findings of historical geology and Darwinian evolution. Pre-adamism was not just part of an abstract, intellectual encounter between the Bible and science but implicated in legitimisation attempts of racism and slavery (Samuel George Morton, George Gliddon, Josiah Clark Nott) and thus grounded in the political and social realities of particular constituencies and their discourses. Let us now look at the discourses in some detail.

The Bible as a guidebook of science

Lilienthal contributed to a discourse that took the Bible and, in particular, its historical portions in a literal sense. The Old and New Testaments alike are divinely inspired and therefore inerrant. Moses is the author of the Pentateuch and God has spoken through him, revealing in the opening chapters of Genesis the origin and early history of the world. Biblical history is

[3] Moore, 'Geologists and Interpreters of Genesis'.
[4] Livingstone, *Adam's Ancestors*, *passim*.
[5] Livingstone, *Adam's Ancestors*, pp. 220–1.

factual, reliable and in this sense scientific. The Bible has to be taken as a source of natural knowledge that can and must inform science, specifically the scientific theories to which the sacred narrative pertains.

This does not mean that the Bible is a textbook of biology, geology, or any other branch of science – as literalists have often remonstrated; but the letter of the historical texts does provide a framework of physical truths about the origin, governance and end of the world. Moreover, literalism need not imply a naive and simplistic hermeneutic. For example, biblical references to the sun rising or setting have to be given a commonsense interpretation as optical reality: they are colloquial speech, just like ours today, and do not mean an endorsement of a geocentric as opposed to a heliocentric solar system. Already Calvin had conceded – as indeed had some of the Church Fathers – that divine revelation is accommodated to the circumstances of the original Bible writers, a view to which both literalists and non-literalists appealed.

Most important to the literalist discourse have been creation (Genesis 1 and 2), the flood (Genesis 6–8) and the age of the world as calculated on the basis of the genealogies of the ante- and post-diluvial patriarchs (Genesis 9–11). On the validity of these signposts of the early history of the world depends – they believed and believe – the entire scheme of a divinely guided, eschatological history and Christian soteriology. As the English clergyman–naturalist and convert to Methodism Joseph Townsend (1739–1816) commented: 'The science of geology becomes of infinite importance, when we consider it as connected with our immortal hopes. These depend on the truth of revelation, and the whole system of revealed religion is ultimately connected with the veracity of Moses.'[6]

Thus the deluge became a crucial issue, the more so when, during the half-century from the 1780s to the 1830s, the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century cosmogonical explanations of the earth's crust were superseded by modern stratigraphy and vertebrate palaeontology.[7] The outer shell of the globe proved to be made up of an enormously complex sequence of rock formations. Could the formational complexity of the earth's crust be attributed to the deluge, and were all these sediments with their organic fossils deposited in the course of approximately one year – the duration of Noah's flood? Or

[6] Joseph Townsend, *The Character of Moses Established for Veracity as an Historian, Recording Events from the Creation to the Deluge* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1813), p. 430.

[7] Martin J. S. Rudwick, *Bursting the Limits of Time: The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Revolution* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Martin J. S. Rudwick, *Worlds before Adam: The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Reform* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

had these rocks accumulated over long periods of antediluvian earth history and had the deluge been of little consequence, geologically speaking?

On this question a major bifurcation of opinion took place during the two or three decades following the French Revolution. Some of the Protestant leaders of the new historical geology created space for their science by reinterpreting the creation and deluge stories in a non-literal sense (see the next section). They limited the geological impact of the biblical flood by ascribing merely superficial features of sedimentation and landscape erosion to diluvial action. The massive rock formations below the surface had been deposited during earlier periods of geological history. This theory, that the flood had been of limited geological consequence, was referred to as diluvialism (and today as old-earth creationism). By contrast, 'deluge geology' ascribed most if not all of the sedimentary record to the flood, and simultaneously insisted on a traditional, literal interpretation of Genesis (young-earth creationism). This theory stated that much of the geological column as well as the fossil record had accumulated neither before, nor during, but after the six days of creation or, more precisely, after the Fall, and was nearly in its entirety attributable to the deluge. If death and suffering had come into the world by sin, the fossil record with its evidence of death, extinction and carnivorousness ought to have accumulated in the wake of the Fall.

The literalists – also known as Mosaical geologists or scriptural geologists (early representatives were Granville Penn, George Bugg, George Fairholme and George Young) – began taking on a recognisable identity upon the publication of, and as critics of, the diluvialism of the Oxford clergyman–geologist William Buckland (1784–1856). More than before, they emphasised the universality and geological effectiveness of Noah's deluge, in that way making it possible to retain for the earth a young age of the traditional order of magnitude as determined by the sacred chronologies of scholars from Scaliger to Ussher.

By now, the literalist discourse was cut loose from its initial establishmentarian moorings at the centre of academe and had become located at the provincial periphery. In North America literalism, although not marginalised to the same extent, was being formulated in reaction to modern geology, prominently by the Episcopalian professor of medicine at the University of the City of New York, Martyn Paine (1794–1877). Directing his censure at Buckland, among others, Paine insisted on a literal understanding of the stories of creation and deluge. He saw in the coal formations of the Carboniferous period proofs of the efficacy of the flood waters to uproot the luxuriant vegetation of the antediluvian period and deposit layers of plant debris intercalated with

strata of reworked sediment. Paine's deluge geology went hand in hand with a strong defence of the immateriality of the human soul, and his most substantive essays arguing for a literalist hermeneutic of creation and deluge appeared as major additions to his *Physiology of the Soul* (1872), a volume that met with rapturous acclaim across North America.

Paine objected also to the theory of evolution, and deluge geology acquired additional meaning through the second half of the nineteenth century with the emergence of Charles Darwin's theory. Given its utter irreconcilability with the letter of Genesis 1, Darwinism was firmly rejected. Thus young-earth literalism became young-earth creationism which, from the start, used deluge geology to disprove organic evolution by arguing that the geological column with its progressive fossil record, the main pillar of evolution theory, was an artefact of circular reasoning. Young-earth creationism fell on fertile soil among conservatives in the established churches, in particular the Missouri Synod Lutherans and Presbyterians, but also among Nonconformist and new religious groups that flourished in North America. A number of the key contributors to the literalist discourse were Seventh-Day Adventists, prominent among them the Canadian self-taught geologist George McCready Price (1870–1963), who in his *Illogical Geology* (1906) argued that the most effective way to defeat the theory of evolution was to deprive it of its framework of geological time. Price's *magnum opus*, entitled *The New Geology* (1923), was an audacious and imaginative attempt to revise modern geology in terms of a literal understanding of the first nine chapters of Genesis.

Price's attack strategy against evolution gained popularity with the Creation Science movement in the 1960s, which took off in the wake of the movement's canonical text, *The Genesis Flood* (1961), written by the conservative Evangelical[8] Old Testament scholar John C. Whitcomb (b. 1924) and the Southern Baptist professor of hydraulic engineering Henry M. Morris (1918–2006). The book significantly enlarged upon Price's young-earth creationism, by addressing such major issues as the radioactive dating of the age of the earth.[9] The twentieth-century constituency of this hermeneutic discourse has been researched in detail.[10] It is part of the fundamentalist movement of orthodox Christianity that has repeatedly clashed with secular science in the

[8] 'Evangelical' is used throughout to denote 'orthodox Christian'.

[9] Whitcomb and Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, pp. 331–438. A more recent exposition of the same views is Ariel A. Roth, *Origins: Linking Science and Scripture* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1998).

[10] The definitive study is Numbers, *The Creationists*.

courts over the teaching of evolution/creation in schools, and that in recent years has linked hands with creationism in the Muslim world.[11]

The adjustable Bible

As early as the second half of the eighteenth century Jean André Deluc (1727–1817), a Genevan Calvinist who had moved to London to become Reader to the Queen, helped shape a different discourse from the literalist one – a discourse that accepted modern science yet also stuck to a belief in the Bible as God's Word.[12] Apparent discrepancies between Scripture and science can be resolved by taking relevant biblical expressions and stories in the right sense, in many instances figuratively. The Bible is scientifically accurate, if only we interpret the texts correctly.

As a century later the British Liberal statesman and prime minister Willam Ewart Gladstone (1809–98) summed up in his *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture* (1890), the issue is not one of the substance of divine revelation as conveyed to us in the Old Testament, but of its literary form.[13] In a crucial concession to geology, the discourse of an adjustable Bible accepts that the earth is very much older than indicated by sacred chronology, and has gone through long periods of time during which successively higher forms of life came into existence. Central to this discourse is the creation story of Genesis 1, reinterpretations of which open the shutters on the time vistas needed by modern geology. In other words, the sedimentary and fossil record were, by and large, not attributable to the deluge, which in turn, in this discourse, has been placed on the back burner.

Scientific Christians and theologians alike, concerned that the book of nature should not be at variance with Scripture, put forward a variety of harmonisation schemata.[14] A genre of literature developed that dealt with the congruence of the Bible and science. Not uncommonly, geological textbooks would include a chapter on how to reconcile the new earth history with the biblical accounts of creation and deluge. The Yale University scientist Benjamin Silliman (1779–1864) added a lengthy supplement on 'Consistency of Geology with Sacred History' to the American edition of Robert Bakewell's

[11] Numbers, *The Creationists*, pp. 421–7.
[12] Marita Hübner, *Jean André Deluc (1727–1817): protestanitische Kultur und moderne Naturforschung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), *passim*.
[13] William Ewart Gladstone, *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture* (London: Isbister, 1892), pp. v, 26–91.
[14] Rupke, 'Christianity and the Sciences', pp. 164–71.

An Introduction to Geology (1833). Edward Hitchcock (1793–1864), president of Amherst College and professor of natural theology and geology, included in his frequently reprinted *Elementary Geology* (1840) a chapter on the 'Connection between Geology and Natural and Revealed Religion'. James D. Dana (1813–95), Silliman's student and successor at Yale as professor of natural history and geology, appended to all four editions of his authoritative *Manual of Geology* (1863, 1874, 1880 and 1895) a Genesis and geology harmonisation scheme.

During the early part of the nineteenth century much of this literature was produced by English-language scientists – experts for the most part in comparative anatomy, palaeontology and stratigraphy, such as Buckland at Oxford – whereas during the century's second half the genre was enriched with a number of monographs by theologians, mainly in Germany (notwithstanding Dana's simultaneous writings). The high point of the reconciliation literature was reached with the formidable scholarship of Otto Zöckler (1833–1906), renowned also for his work in the areas of Old and New Testament studies, dogmatics and church history. His *Geschichte der Beziehungen zwischen Theologie und Naturwissenschaft, mit besondrer Rücksicht auf Schöpfungsgeschichte* (2 vols., 1877–9) is a classic of the genre.

Three basic reconciliation exegeses of the hexaemeron existed/exist, all three tolerated in the discourse of an adjustable Bible, and shifts from one position to another have not been uncommon. The first of the reconciliation attempts – the concordist or 'day–age' interpretation – sees a concordance between the Mosaic days of creation and the stratigraphic succession of major formations and periods of earth history, and gives the word 'day' the meaning of 'period' (Georges Deluc, Georges Cuvier, Wiseman, Hugh Miller, Franz Delitzsch). The second schema – the restitution, 'gap' or 'ruin and restoration' exegesis – focuses on the first two verses of the Mosaic hexaemeron, placing an indefinite and possibly very long time gap between verses 1 and 2 that could accommodate all of geological history, which had thus taken place before the six days of creation (Buckland, John Pye Smith, Andreas Wagner).

The third and least literal exegesis was the idealist, which states that the creation days represent ideal 'moments' rather than consecutive periods of time. The creation days were neither actual days nor periods but a logical sequence of aspects of divine creation that functions as a narrative device (Friedrich Michelis, Johann Baptiste Baltzer). A version of this third exegesis was propagated also by Gladstone: 'It seems to me that the "days" of the Mosaist are more properly to be described as CHAPTERS IN THE HISTORY OF CREATION.'[15]

[15] Gladstone, *Impregnable Rock*, p. 56.

In the early twentieth century this view was reformulated in Calvinist circles by, for example, the Dutch theologian Arie Noordtzij (1871–1944), becoming known as the framework hypothesis of Genesis 1. For Noordtzij the six days of creation are the sum of two parallel tridiums, days and nights as well as mornings and evenings being used as a literary framework to lead up to Sabbath observance.[16] Yet another version gained a certain popularity during the mid-twentieth century when Air Commodore P. J. Wisemann (1888–1948) (father of Donald, the evangelical archaeologist), published his *Creation Revealed in Six Days: The Evidence of Scripture Confirmed by Archaeology* (1948). The days of creation correspond to the sequence in which divine revelation had been recorded on six tablets (a view adhered to also by Robert E. D. Clark and Bernard Ramm), thus 'Babel', in the form of ancient clay tablet accounts, being called upon to support 'Bible'.

In the wake of *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin (1809–82) the discourse of an adjustable Bible was faced with a new challenge which required a further reinterpretation of Genesis 1, this time no longer of its time frame but of the nature of God's creative acts. The new adjustment conceded that the aim of Scripture was not to supply us with the workings of the creative process but with the glorification of God the Creator. Not all who participated in the discourse were willing to accommodate the theory of evolution. Zöckler, for one, objected to Darwin's theory;[17] but many others had no great difficulty reinterpreting the process of creation from a special, instantaneous and direct divine intervention to a gradual and indirect act, God having used organic evolution to execute his plan of creation. Euphemistically, evolution would be referred to as progressive creation. Before the publication of *The Origin of Species*, Darwin's rival, the Anglican theist Richard Owen (1804–92), had redefined creation from a miraculous event to a naturalistic process, naming it 'the ordained becoming of living things'.[18] Yet a particular problem, not always squarely addressed or readily solved, was that of 'man's place in nature', which included such issues as 'the antiquity of man', whether or not humans are unique for possessing an immortal soul, and the Fall.

Christian life scientists and biblical scholars alike on both sides of the Atlantic embraced the substance of evolution theory (Asa Gray, James McCosh,

[16] Arie Noordtzij, *Gods woord en der eeuwen getuigenis: het Oude Testament in het licht der oostersche opgravingen* (Kampen: Kok, 1924), pp. 111–19.

[17] Otto Zöckler, *Ueber Schöpfungsgeschichte und Naturwissenschaft* (Gotha: Perthes, 1869), p. 50.

[18] Nicolaas A. Rupke, *Richard Owen: Victorian Naturalist* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 236.

Benjamin B. Warfield, Alexander Winchell, St George Jackson Mivart).[19] Unlike true Darwinians, however, a majority of Evangelical evolutionists firmly held to divine providence, and they remained convinced that the pattern of evolution was not random but a goal-directed unfolding towards mankind or, more specifically yet, to a Christ-centred point in the history of the cosmos, as proposed by the Catholic priest and French paleo-anthropologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955).

The non-scientific Bible

In the third discourse, the relationship between the Bible and science is unproblematic for the simple reason that it is non-existent: there is no meaningful connection between the two. 'Hebrew Scripture' has no bearing on the modern study of the physical world or the other way around. Bible and science belong to wholly separate domains of reality. The Bible pertains to the sphere of morality and spirituality; science, by contrast, has dominion in the realm of physical things. Biblical descriptions of the natural world may have a poetical quality but the belief that these passages should contain divine revelations about the natural world in accord with modern scientific discoveries and theories is absurd. To the extent that people wish to see in these poetical passages in the Old and New Testaments some elements of divinity, inspiration and revelation, that is admissible; but inerrancy and literal truth are out of the question, as the Bible bears many imperfections that mark its origins as a historical document.

An eminent representative of this view was the Prussian traveller and scientist Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859). Little if any reference to the Bible occurs in his voluminous scientific oeuvre, except in his enormously popular *Cosmos* (German original 1845–62), where he discussed the Bible, especially the Old Testament, for its poetic descriptions of nature. Damning with faint praise, Humboldt downplayed the importance of the Bible by extolling its qualities as 'Hebrew poetry'.[20]

German Jews appreciated Humboldt's respect for the literary quality of the Old Testament; but orthodox Christians raised the alarm: the great,

[19] E.g. James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America 1870–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); David N. Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders: The Encounter between Evangelical Theology and Evolutionary Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans and Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987).

[20] von Humboldt, *Cosmos*, vol. II, p. 57.

trend-setting scientist was removing God and religion from the scientific study of nature. Humboldt defended himself by appealing to the example set by 'the very Christian Immanuel Kant',[21] who in his *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels* (1755) had separated science from Scripture, making no reference in his cosmogonical treatise to the Mosaical cosmogony and relegating God-talk to the sphere of metaphysics. Kant's authority and example were appealed to by other scientific Christians who, while continuing to hold the Bible in respectful esteem, dissociated their scientific work from Scripture.

In Great Britain a leading representative of the 'separate spheres' discourse was Baden Powell (1796–1860), an Anglican clergyman and the Savilian Professor of Geometry at Oxford. Over a number of decades Powell addressed the issue of the Bible and science in a series of publications, from *Revelation and Science* (1833) to *The Unity of Worlds and of Nature* (new title to the second edition of 1856). The Bible is a source of moral and spiritual intimations 'which are, in their essential nature, alien from physical consideration', Powell insisted.[22]

The third discourse merged with higher criticism of the Bible. By 1800 Lutheran theologians in Germany had criticised the Mosaical geologists for taking the Genesis account of creation and flood literally. *Moses und David keine Geologen* (Moses and David were no geologists) stated the title of a book published in 1799 by the Helmstedt and later Göttingen theologian David Julius Potter (1760–1838). Genesis 1 was to be bracketed with Psalm 104 and represented a *Schöpfungshymnus*, a creation hymn, the main purpose of which had been the ordination of the Sabbath week. In a later critique, too, the original purpose of the creation story was not to give an account of how the world came about but to assert the monotheistic view and fight polytheism.[23] More radical than the hermeneutic revisions that were forced on many Bible believers by science were those by this critical tradition within theology, leaders of which ranged from Potter's older Göttingen colleague Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827) to the latter's later successor Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), both Orientalist theologians. Whereas geology appeared to remove a literal meaning from Genesis, the documentary hypothesis of the historical school in biblical studies went further, reducing the entire Pentateuch from a unitary record of divine revelation to a product of historical change,

[21] von Humboldt, *Cosmos*, vol. 1, p. xxv.
[22] Powell, *The Unity of Worlds*, p. 300.
[23] Eckart Otto, 'Auf welche Fragen antwortet eine antike Schöpfungstheologie im alten Orient und in der Bibel? Die Falle des Kreationismus', in Otto Kraus (ed.), *Evolutionstheorie und Kreationismus – ein Gegensatz* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2009), pp. 17–26.

assembled from a variety of pre-existent sources and repeatedly altered in a process of editorial changes. The creation and deluge stories, for example, were traced back from Bible to Babel. Scripture appeared diminished from a divinely revealed, inerrant account of the grand scheme of the world – past, present and future – to a fallible product of human contrivance, in part plagiarised from pagan sources.

Higher criticism did not become a topic of major public debate in Britain before the appearance of *Essays and Reviews* (1860),[24] questioning the Mosaic authorship, and with that the authenticity of the Pentateuch, as a divinely inspired account of history. Powell was one of the seven authors of *Essays and Reviews*, all members of the Established Church, the 'Septem contra Christum', as a troubled Cantabrigian called them. In his contribution 'On the Study of the Evidences of Christianity' Powell reiterated that the 'region of spiritual things' and the 'domain of physical causation' were two unrelated spheres.[25] Biblical miracles, because they go against the laws of physics, are not believable, and Powell pleaded for a 'Christianity without miracles'. Biblical stories that are claimed to be historical but contradict scientific fact must be 'transformed into truths taught by parables'. A fellow contributor, the lawyer and Egyptologist Charles W. Goodwin (1817–78), insisted that neither the literal interpretation of Genesis nor the figurative one does justice to the nature of the 'Hebrew cosmogony'. It is not a divine 'but a human utterance, which it has pleased Providence to use in a special way for the education of mankind'.[26]

This discourse, by its very nature, was more practised than verbally communicated, and Powell was somewhat of an exception in publicly expressing his convictions about the separateness of Bible and science. Others did in their work what Powell put in writing. Among these were such Christian giants of Victorian science as John Herschel (1792–1871), Charles Lyell (1797–1875) and Richard Owen (1804–92). Tellingly, none of these religious men of science consented to having his name put to the so-called Scientists' Declaration, which, in response to *Essays and Reviews*, affirmed the essential harmony between Holy Writ and physical science. Owen, for one, when asked for his

[24] Important, too, was the bishop of Natal, John William Colenso's *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined* (London: Longman, 1862).

[25] Baden Powell, 'On the Study of the Evidences of Christianity', in John William Parker (ed.), *Essays and Reviews*, 10th edn. (London: Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1862), pp. 112–72 at p. 152.

[26] Charles W. Goodwin, 'On the Mosaic Cosmogony', in Parker (ed.), *Essays and Reviews*, pp. 249–305 at p. 305.

endorsement of the Declaration, declined by retorting that modern science, not Scripture, was the means by which God revealed natural truth.[27]

In the course of the twentieth century the discourse of a non-scientific Bible increasingly merged with the larger discourse that separates religion – rather than just Scripture – and science. Lately, the Harvard evolutionary palaeontologist and science populariser Stephen Jay Gould (1941–2002) revitalised the discourse of separate domains, coining the acronym NOMA – non-overlapping magisteria – to describe the two autonomous realms of religious belief and scientific knowledge.[28]

The complementary Bible

In recent decades a somewhat different discourse from the one that allocates separate domains to the Bible and science has become louder. It recognises also that science has its limitations, especially in addressing ultimate questions about the past and future of the world. The Bible may provide answers to these, and thus complement science. The two are fellow travellers, engaged in a dialogue, each contributing its special knowledge in addressing the same reality, but different aspects of this, and each from its own epistemological vantage point.

This discourse comes in the wake of diminishing expectations in the post–Second World War period of what science can contribute to the public good. The atom bomb and a broad variety of similar derailments of scientific knowledge have demonstrated that science needs to be kept on a leash of moral governance, for the provision of which many are looking anew to religion and its sacred texts. Moreover, the development of atomic physics, particularly of quantum mechanics and, more recently, of the latest strides forward in big bang cosmology, have seemed to legitimise a range of metaphysical and religious speculations in which scientists themselves have indulged, from Pascual Jordan (1902–80) to, for example, Paul Davies (b. 1946). A new natural theology has emerged, today incorporated in the John Templeton Foundation, which promotes the study of the physical world as spiritual capital. Talk is of convergence between religion and science, of synergy and of scientists discovering in their work spirituality if not the divine. The Foundation's preoccupation is more with God, religion and spirituality than with Bible and science, but the relationship between these two does receive some attention.

[27] Rupke, *Owen*, pp. 335–6.
[28] Stephen Jay Gould, *Rock of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life* (New York: Ballantine, 1999), *passim*.

The focus of interest of this discourse is on cosmology and on the question to what extent the biblical and scientific conceptions of the world cohere. Darwinian evolution figures thereby less than such issues as the temporal beginning of the universe, the anthropic principle that considers humans and their retrospective understanding of the universe as a prospective outcome of cosmic evolution and the end times. Eschatology is providing a striking case for dialogue. The Catholic physicist–theologian Stanley Jaki (b. 1924) and the physicist–philosopher Erwin McMullin (b. 1924) have both stressed the independent validity of Scripture as a source for our understanding of physical reality. An Anglican representative is the British physicist and theologian John Polkinghorne (b. 1930), like Jaki a recipient of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. No one view captures the universe, he believes, no single interpretative key will unlock every ontological door. Biblical belief captures reality in a particular way, and so does science. As Polkinghorne and his collaborator, the Heidelberg evangelical systematic theologian Michael Welker (b. 1947), state: 'We are not reintroducing the old assumption that science deals with facts and truth while theology handles meaning and value. Our claim is more subtle and demanding: science and theology are both concerned with realities (facts and meanings; truth and value) attentive to the connection between understanding and what is presented to be understood.'[29]

Yet in this as well as in the adjustable Bible discourse, conceptions of God and religion have for the most part taken the place of Scripture references, the latter being relegated to a back-seat position. Moses and Genesis have been substituted by references to great theologians and their hermeneutic inventions – for example, by references to Karl Barth and *The Church Dogmatics*.

The anti-scientific Bible

Gould's NOMA olive branch held out to religion is, in the view of some of his scientific colleagues, just a fig leaf to cover the shame of biblical inconsequentiality.

Whereas the other discourses were and are conducted by theologians as well as scientists, the anti-scientific Bible discourse has been dominated by philosophers and scientists. Some of Lilienthal's eighteenth-century deist and

[29] John Polkinghorne and Michael Welker (eds.), *The End of the World and the Ends of God: Science and Theology on Eschatology* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), p. 5.

atheist adversaries wrote with contempt about the Bible. Of later authors writing disparagingly about Scripture, a few examples may suffice. Carl Vogt (1817–95), known for his materialist philosophy and participation in the revolution of 1848, systematically denounced and ridiculed the Mosaic hexaemeron, the story of Noah's Ark and especially, too, the unity of humankind in Adam and Eve.[30]

An example from Britain was Joseph McCabe (1867–1955) who, having left the Catholic priesthood, became a freethinker and atheist who not only rejected the literalist and the harmonist interpretations of the Bible but higher criticism as well. In one of his many publications, *The Bankruptcy of Religion* (1917), he argued that the approach to the Bible by Eichhorn and his followers was merely a ploy by liberal theologians to save what could be saved from the sinking ship of Scripture. Higher criticism had been a strategy to preserve religion and theology against the unstoppable march of truth, giving Christianity a more reasonable, acceptable view of the Bible. The Old Testament and its early books were childlike and demonstrably wrong, with 'numerous palpable blunders and inconsistencies'. The churches and the clergy 'imposed upon ignorant Europe a colossal delusion' of the Bible as a supernatural document. If Moses was not the inspired author of the Pentateuch, the position of Christ is directly affected, reducing him to 'a human and fallible person'.[31]

In the course of the twentieth century this discourse also moved away from specific references to Scripture to general ones about God and religion. The Cambridge philosopher, mathematician and political pacifist Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), in his *Science and Religion*, echoed views similar to those who had engaged in the anti-scientific Bible discourse, but he rarely referred to the Bible specifically. More recently, in the wake of the resurgence of the literalist discourse, a number of Darwinian atheists such as Richard Dawkins (b. 1941) and Daniel Dennett (b. 1942) have returned to attacks on the Bible. To Dawkins, for example, the Bible has no valid truth claims, not even in matters of morality. Parts of the Bible 'are odious by any reasonable standards'.[32] Today biblical morality must strike any civilised person as 'obnoxious'. With respect to ethics, Scripture shows the birthmarks of crude and cruel ages. The Bible is to ethics what folk medicine is to scientific medicine: it may contain valuable elements but needs testing by science. Against Gould and his NOMA

[30] Carl Vogt, *Köhlerglauben und Wissenschaft: eine Streitschrift gegen Hofrath Rudolph Wagner in Göttingen* (Giessen: Ricker, 1855).

[31] Joseph McCabe, *The Bankruptcy of Religion* (London: Watts & Co., 1917), pp. 137, 141–2, 145.

[32] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London etc.: Bantam Press, 2006), p. 57.

notion Dawkins and his atheist comrades-in-arms argue that Scripture and science are not unrelated magisteria but overlap in the sense that religious faith and its sacred texts such as the Bible have primitive evolutionary origins and are subject to scientific deconstruction.[33]

'To be fair', Dawkins conciliates, 'much of the Bible is not systematically evil but just plain weird, as you would expect of a chaotically cobbled-together anthology of disjointed documents, composed, revised, translated, distorted and "improved" by hundreds of anonymous authors, editors, copyists, unknown to us and mostly unknown to each other, spanning nine centuries.'[34] If we want to retain the Bible – and Dawkins concedes that we should – it can be given a place in our literary education: so many expressions in novels and plays would not be understood if we lost our knowledge of biblical stories.[35]

Conflict between discourses

Ever since James Moore's *The Post-Darwinian Controversies* (1979) the old conflict thesis of the Bible and science has been dying a slow but certain death. As pointed out above, among historians of the subject the complexity thesis has taken over, allowing for a multiplicity of relationships between scriptural hermeneutics and the scientific study of the physical world, most of these friendly. The trend of scholarship in recent decades has been away from an epic warfare narrative towards stories of interactions in different places, under different circumstances and, for the most part, to beneficial effect. 'Conflict' and 'warfare' have been declared offside. This has created a problem, however, in terms of what to do with the historical evidence for the private agony, public fights and even warfare that so abundantly does occur in the bibliographical record of the relationship between the Bible and science. Fights, sometimes fierce ones, have frequently taken place, and continue to do so. Where then precisely is conflict located if not between Scripture and science?

Some have suggested that tensions between the Bible and science have a professional dimension.[36] To a certain extent, 'Bible' and 'science' stand as proxies for 'theologians' and 'scientists', and the move away from the Bible as a standard of truth has been a transition from theologians to scientists

[33] It perhaps should be added that although the anti-scientific Bible writers for the most part were and are atheists, the reverse does not apply: not all atheists are aggressively anti-Bible.

[34] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p. 237.

[35] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, pp. 340–3.

[36] Frank M. Turner, 'The Victorian Conflict between Science and Religion: A Professional Dimension', *Isis* 69 (1978), pp. 356–76.

whose expertise we regard as paramount in distinguishing fact from fiction. Professional rivalry can indeed be detected in historical changes to the relationship between the Bible and science. Yet the Bible–science discourses, for the most part, do not translate into professional theology–science rivalries. After all, many of the leading figures wanting to retain biblical authority were/are themselves scientists: the geologists Buckland, Dana, or Teilhard de Chardin, the physicists Jaki and Polkinghorne, the hydraulic engineer Morris, and many more. As Charles Gillispie long ago pointed out, the 'Genesis and geology' debate of the period 1790–1850 was not a matter of religion versus science but of religion within science.[37] This observation can be extended: the major, first-order controversies have been located in the interstices between the different discourses, each discourse with its self-referential truth claims about the theology and science of the Bible–science copula, and each supported by experts from a variety of disciplines. The biblical literalist Martyn Paine did not in the first instance argue for theology and against science – he himself was a scientist – but took up the cudgels against those who propounded an adjustable Bible such as his fellow scientist Buckland, whose harmony schemes he excoriated as 'impudent professions of corroborating Holy Writ' that 'opened the door for a wide-spread infidelity'.[38] The discourses clashed because they translate into questions of social and political agendas, of lifestyle, values and vested interests. Thus far, the study of their socio-political locations has been thoroughly carried out only for the literalist one. A desideratum of further research would be the societal anchoring grounds of the others as well.

[37] Gillispie, *Genesis and Geology*, *passim*.
[38] Martyn Paine, *A Review of Theoretical Geology* (from the *Protestant Episcopal Review* (1856)) (pamphlet), p. 11.

36
The Bible and hymnody

J. R. WATSON

Hymns are closely connected to the Bible from which they come. They are part of the same church service, in which hymn singing, Bible reading, prayer and sermon operate together to make the pattern of worship. Hymns supplement the readings from Holy Scripture, or underline points made in the sermon, and the Bible is the code in which they are written. All human discourse depends on the understanding of the code in which it functions, and the Bible, as Blake saw, 'is the great code of art'.[1] Most hymns would be incomprehensible without the Bible, for they allude and refer to episodes, sayings, or textual fragments from the Old and New Testaments.

Such a relationship is not a static one, for hymns depend also on human need. They express something of the longings of the human spirit, and the preoccupations of the time at which they are written. To write the history of hymnody in relation to the Bible is to write the history of the Christian church, and to write the history of the Christian church is to engage with the religious, social and political developments of which it is a part, for which it serves, and to which it reacts. The development of hymnody is an unrolling process of adaptation, providing for worshippers an expression of their needs at that particular time, supplying hymns that appear to be relevant to the processes of everyday living and to the perceived needs of the church as a worshipping and active community. Hymnody in the last three hundred years is striking evidence of a circular hermeneutics, in which hymn-writers take from the Bible what they need: they come to the Bible in search of texts or passages that will supply answers to *their* problems or to *their* questions for society, and they write hymns that send singers back to the Bible. More significantly, and perhaps more dangerously, some hymn-writers interpret the Bible

[1] 'The Old & New Testaments are the Great Code of Art'. Written on the Laocoön engraving. See *The Poems of William Blake*, ed. W. H. Stevenson (London: Longman, 1971), p. 329.

in ways that give them reassurance. They privilege those elements in the Bible that support their views about what should be done about the church, or the world, or about individual behaviour.

At their worst, therefore, hymns become narcissistic, reading the Bible to support fragile identities; they become part of an armour against the world and against other possibilities of belief and behaviour. At their best, they answer the deepest human need. They take from the Bible a text, or a phrase, and apply it in such a way that it 'speaks to' the human situation at that particular time (and the best hymns transcend their own time). They draw out something that was not seen before, or present a verse in such a way that it now comes home to the reader or singer with a force and relevance that seems absolutely right (for hymns themselves are read in a circular way, dominated by the hermeneutics of human need). A hymn such as 'Abide With Me',[2] by Henry Francis Lyte (1793–1847), takes a verse from Luke 24: 'Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent' (verse 29). In the original context this is no more than a kind invitation to stay the night because it is early evening and getting dark: in its hymnic form it becomes a plea for the presence of God in life and in death: 'In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!.' It understands the changes and chances of this fleeting world – 'in clouds and sunshine, O abide with me' – and the sense that everything passes – 'change and decay in all around I see'. It phrases these things in such a way that they are instantly accessible and instantly recognised as a part of the human condition. The human state is sanctified by the hymn, used at evensong, and at funerals, and at great occasions such as the football Cup Final. The film *A Bridge Too Far*, for example, has an unforgettable moment when the exhausted soldiers, surrounded by the enemy, without ammunition and supplies, and without hope, spontaneously start to sing, very quietly, 'Abide with me; fast falls the eventide'. It is the ability of such hymns to touch the heart at certain times and in necessary places that justifies them as works of art and as subjects of study, in addition to their religious function in worship.

Hymns have always drawn inspiration from the Bible, and the Reformation set this in concrete. As William Chillingworth famously put it, the Bible and the Bible only was the religion of the Reformers;[3] and the Bible in the vernacular was, for them, the source of illumination for which they never ceased to be thankful, as the preface to the Geneva Bible put it (in words taken from 1

[2] *English Hymnal*, 363.

[3] William Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants: A Safe Way to Salvation* (London, printed by Miles Flesher for John Clark, 1638).

Peter 2:9), 'in that it hath pleased [God] to call us unto this marveilous light of the Gospel'. It was from this thankfulness, and this resource, that the first English hymns came, though slowly; much more slowly than the vernacular hymns in Germany, which were inspired by the example of Luther and others such as Nikolaus Herman (*c.* 1480–1561), one of the 'storm-troopers of the Reformation'.[4] The English Reformation, shaped by the Protestant exiles who fled to Frankfurt and Geneva during the reign of Mary Tudor, was different. Calvinist in belief and temper, it relied for its singing on metrical psalms, and when George Wither (1588–1667) tried to introduce hymns (mainly paraphrases) in his *Hymns and Psalms of the Church* (1623) he was curtly told that they were 'unfit to keep company with David's Psalms'.[5] Devotional poems were written, but few were sung; and it was not until after the Restoration that the Baptist minister Benjamin Keach introduced the singing of hymns into his services, and not without controversy. Keach's hymns were doggerel, woeful attempts to paraphrase Scripture; and it was only when another dissenter, Isaac Watts (1674–1748), began to write hymns that the form became established. Watts's *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* was published in 1707, with Book I containing 150 hymns entitled 'Collected from the Holy Scriptures', to demonstrate their unimpeachable provenance. His hymns were primarily expositions of particular texts: although he placed a high value on inspiration (as his poem 'The Adventurous Muse' makes clear), he clearly saw it as his duty to subordinate his inclination to the greater demands of simplicity and instruction. From this, however, he deviated to a degree, for the paraphrases of Scripture not only exhort the singer to praise but they also express something of his experience. This is seen most notably in those hymns that celebrate redemption: God as Creator is wonderful, but God as Redeemer is even more so:

> Nature with open volume stands
> To spread its maker's praise abroad . . .
>
> But in the grace that rescued man
> His brightest form of glory shines;
> Here on the cross 'tis fairest drawn
> In precious blood and crimson lines.[6]

Watts was a great influence on those who came after him. His follower in the Independent ministry, Philip Doddridge (1702–51), wrote hymns to follow

[4] Arnold E. Berger, *Die Sturmtruppen der Reformation* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1931).
[5] Edward Farr, 'Introduction', in Wither, *Hymns and Songs of the Church*, p. xxiv.
[6] *Congregational Praise* (hereafter *CP*), 129.

the sermon on a specific text. His hymns were collected after his death by his pupil Job Orton under the title *Hymns Founded on Various Texts in the Holy Scriptures* (1755). Like Watts he versified the Bible, only sparingly inserting his own theology or ideology ('When I Survey the Wondrous Cross',[7] Watts's greatest hymn, is an exception, but it is a dramatisation and reflection rather than a new interpretation). Similarly, the Baptist writer Anne Steele (1716–78), who often imitated Watts, provided variations on the sufferings of Christ but stayed close to the scriptural accounts. For her the Bible was, as it was for Chillingworth, the source of truth and value:

> Here may the wretched sons of want
> Exhaustless riches find:
> Riches, above what earth can grant,
> And lasting as the mind.[8]

It is important to remember this closeness to the Bible when studying the work of Charles Wesley (1707–88). Critics, Methodists especially, have sometimes been lost in wonder, love and praise over Wesley's use of Holy Scripture,[9] but in this respect he was simply following the practice of his predecessors and contemporaries, though with more range and subtlety. What distinguishes his work from theirs is not the use of the Bible, rich and significant though that is, but the degree to which he is prepared to bring his own experience to the texts that he uses. He is prepared to employ the texts in the service of his own belief and he has an imaginative response to them that brilliantly explores their significance in human terms.

His first hymn written after his 'conversion' on 21 May 1738 (three days before that of his brother John) asks 'Where shall my wondering soul begin?' – 'how can I find language to express what I feel at this new birth?' – but then goes on, after neglecting to answer his own question:

> Outcasts of men, to you I call,
> Harlots and publicans, and thieves![10]

Wesley was addressing the London of his own day, with its problems of prostitution (Hogarth's *The Harlot's Progress* dates from 1732), taxation (Walpole's government was notorious for unfair taxes) and crime. All this, of course, is an echo of Mark 2:15–16 (and elsewhere), but it is the Gospel applied to

[7] *CP*, 131.
[8] 'Father of Mercies, in Thy Word', *Methodist Hymn Book* (hereafter *MHB*), 302.
[9] See Rattenbury, *The Evangelical Doctrines*, p. 48: 'A skilful man, if the Bible were lost, might extract much of it from Charles Wesley's hymns.'
[10] *MHB*, 361.

the contemporary social situation. Wesley was a hymn-writer of immense variety, but one thing is found throughout his hymns: a desire to 'serve the present age'. That phrase comes from 'A Charge to Keep I Have', a hymn based on (of all unexpected places) Leviticus 8:35, in which Wesley explores the idea of 'Keep the charge of the Lord, that ye die not'. The hymn recognises that his duty is to glorify God in his own lifetime:

> To serve the present age,
> My calling to fulfil:
> O may it all my powers engage
> To do my Master's will![11]

That hymn comes from *Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures* (1762), in which Wesley works his way through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, following the example of Doddridge, but more comprehensively: the number of items is vast (1,478 from the Old Testament, 870 from the New Testament), but many of them are single-verse paraphrases of individual verses. Others, such as 'O thou who Camest from Above'[12] (another hymn from Leviticus, in this case 6:13) are entire hymns, fully crafted with a beginning, middle and end, in this case linking the passage from Leviticus with Acts 2 and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and then going further to apply it to his own spiritual condition ('My acts of faith and love repeat'). Here as elsewhere Wesley was a master at reading the Old Testament with New Testament eyes, as in the astonishing 'Wrestling Jacob'[13] (from Genesis 32), which anticipates Gerard Manley Hopkins in its expression of coming to know God through struggle: the individual believer fights with the God-man, closely grappling with the adversary in a profound exploration of the intensity of the spiritual life, ultimately and painfully – and joyfully – discovering that 'Thy nature and thy name is Love'.

The Wesley brothers saw it as their duty to revive the Church of England in the eighteenth century, and in particular to preach to those who were normally untouched by religion of any kind. Although they were anxious not to appear unpatriotic, especially at times of rebellion such as 1745 (Charles Wesley's hymns of thanksgiving for the victory at Culloden in 1746 were examples of this), their hymns posed a challenge to the individual and to society. They were concerned with religious experience, with what John (in the preface to *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists*, 1780) called

[11] *MHB*, 578.
[12] *MHB*, 386.
[13] *MHB*, 339.

'experimental and practical divinity'. That book was dominated by those hymns of Charles Wesley that were of an 'experimental' kind: concerned with the 'experience' of longing for conversion, conversion itself, backsliding, full redemption, praising God and working for God. It omitted those on the great festivals of the Christian year, and many of those on the Holy Communion (Charles Wesley's *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, 1745, is one of his finest collections; but John Wesley still hoped in 1780 that his followers would be taking Holy Communion in their parish church).

Charles Wesley's hymns of faith and love sang their way into the consciousness of the Methodist societies, and that helped them to grow.[14] They were part of the Evangelical Revival in the Church of England that dominated hymn-writing in the second half of the eighteenth century, notably in the work of John Newton (1725–1807) and William Cowper (1731–1800). Their *Olney Hymns* (1779) has a first book entitled, following Watts and Wesley, 'On select Passages of Scripture'. It contained 141 hymns, from Genesis 3 to Revelation 10. By far the greater contributor was Newton, who had a sharp eye for the picturesque episode and a vigorous interpretation of it. His theme was, in the words of his most famous hymn, 'amazing grace', a concept that fitted well with his extraordinary life as slave-trader-turned-parson. He preached salvation for sinners through the blood of Jesus Christ, a salvation that would save them from hell: it is possible to see the sea-captain's fear of shipwreck on the voyage of life in much of the imagery of Newton's hymns, not only those that celebrate trust in God, such as 'Begone Unbelief'[15] ('With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm') but also those that reckon with the dangers of the spiritual life. The hymn on Belshazzar, from Daniel 5:5–6, begins

> Poor sinners! Little do they think
> With whom they have to do!
> But stand securely on the brink
> Of everlasting woe.

The hymn tells the story of Belshazzar's feast and the writing on the wall, ending

> The law like this hand-writing stands,
> And speaks the wrath of God (*p*);

[14] They also shaped Methodist doctrine, affirming an Arminian belief in the face of George Whitefield's Calvinistic Methodism. Wesley's *Hymns on God's Everlasting Love* (1742) is a series of statements on the theme that 'For all, for all, my Saviour died'.

[15] *MHB*, 511.

But Jesus answers its demands,
And cancels it with blood.[16]

The (*p*) in the text refers the reader to a note at the foot of the page: '(*p*) Colossians ii.14' ('Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross'). Such a practice of annotating hymns with texts was common in hymnbooks of the Evangelical Revival: Martin Madan's *Collection of Psalms and Hymns* (1760) was dense with such footnote references. In *Olney Hymns* the hymns illustrate the common practice of linking the Old Testament with the New, so that the Old Testament stories became (in the words of the title of one of Cowper's hymns) 'Old-Testament Gospel'. It was appended to a text from Hebrews 4:2: 'For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.' It began

Israel in ancient days,
Not only had a view
Of Sinai in a blaze,
But learn'd the gospel too:
The types and symbols were a glass
In which they saw the Saviour's face.[17]

The gospel in these hymns was that of the saving blood, what Charles Wesley had called 'the sprinkled blood' (in 'Father of Everlasting Grace';[18] the image is taken from Hebrews 12:24). The most spectacular example is Cowper's hymn on Zechariah 13:1:

There is a fountain fill'd with blood
Drawn from EMMANUEL's veins;
And sinners, plung'd beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.[19]

These hymns of the Evangelical Revival, and those of Newton and Cowper especially, were based on certain texts and episodes that carried a particular significance for those who believed in the fallen nature of humanity, the reality of hell and the power of sin. Humanity had nothing to trust in but the grace of God:

[16] Newton and Cowper, *Olney Hymns* (hereafter *Olney Hymns*), vol. I, 74.
[17] *Olney Hymns*, vol. I, 132.
[18] *MHB*, 730.
[19] *Olney Hymns*, vol. I, 79; *MHB*, 201.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress;
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.[20]

The metaphor of washing is from 1 Corinthians 6:11 ('but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified'), linked with Isaiah 1:18: ('though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow'). The washing, as in 'There is a Fountain', is in blood, as in Revelation 7:14 ('they . . . have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb').

If hymns concerned with blood and sacrifice were common, so too were those of the penitent sinner. Cowper's tender 'Hark, my Soul! It is the Lord'[21] was written on John 21:16, with the heading 'Lovest thou me?'. It applied to the individual soul the story of Christ's meeting with Peter following the Resurrection, in which Christ's three questions correspond to Peter's three denials. In all of them there is the emphasis on divine grace, the mercy of God for the repentant sinner, the transforming power of the love of Christ for the individual soul, what Charles Wesley sublimely described as 'Love Divine, All Loves Excelling'.[22]

The reasons for this concentration on the atoning blood are complex and difficult to determine. They may have been a deliberate response to the Enlightenment; they were certainly, in the case of John Wesley, influenced by the Pietists, mediated to him through the Moravians; they almost certainly have social and political causes, too, for the early Methodists preached to those who were marginalised, whose lives were poor and hopeless. We may speculate that they also served to satisfy a need for the dramatic: the spiritual autobiographies of the age are full of accounts of sudden conversion after hearing Whitefield or one of the Wesley brothers preach. The reading of the Bible, and the hymns that resulted, emphasised drama and conflict: many of Newton's hymns, for example, have their origins in strong or even violent episodes: 'Cain and Abel', 'Lot in Sodom', 'Gideon's Fleece', 'Samson's Lion', 'Dagon before the Ark'. Such a thirst for spiritual excitement was natural. It surfaced again in the early nineteenth century in the camp meetings of the

[20] Augustus Montague Toplady, 'Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me', *MHB*, 498.
[21] *Olney Hymns*, vol. 1, 118; *MHB*, 432.
[22] *MHB*, 431.

Primitive Methodists (which began in 1807) and the visits of evangelists such as Lorenzo Dow.

It is possible that the revolutionary fervour that swept Britain at the time of the French Revolution absorbed some of this craving for change. The evidence from hymn-writing and Bible-reading is that the production of hymnbooks continued vigorously, but that the composition of original hymns diminished. The same writers appear again and again in Evangelical collections: Joseph Addison, Steele, Watts, Doddridge. There was a perpetual reissue of books for particular denominations or sects, such as those of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, or for those Presbyterians with Unitarian views. There were some outstanding new selections, such as those of Rowland Hill (*A Collection of Psalms and Hymns, chiefly intended for Public Worship*, 1783, 1787, with Supplement 1796, other editions to 1830) or John Rippon (*A Selection of Hymns from the best authors, intended as an Appendix to Dr Watts's Psalms and Hymns*, 1787, tenth edition 1800, enlarged 1827, 1844). The Methodists continued to sing from John Wesley's 1780 *Collection of Hymns*, which was enlarged in a series of editions after his death until it reached a settled form in 1831.

The finest hymn-writer of this period was James Montgomery (1771–1854). He was a contemporary of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and a considerable poet of the Romantic period, admired by Byron and a friend of Southey. With Montgomery's work the emphasis shifts away from the operation of divine grace on the individual, and from the sprinkled blood, towards a hymnody that celebrates 'God Worthy of All Praise' (the original title of 'Songs of Praise the Angels Sang'[23]). In the process Montgomery used the Bible as Charles Wesley had done, quoting and alluding, his quotations taken from many parts of the Bible. He had two principal interests: Sunday schools and the mission field, both of them looking forward to major preoccupations of nineteenth-century hymnody. For the Sunday schools of Sheffield, celebrating their annual festivities at Whitsuntide, Montgomery wrote hymns such as 'Stand up, and Bless the Lord',[24] a hymn that begins with Nehemiah 9:5 and continues with various psalms, salted with the New Testament and God's 'love in Christ' in verse 5. For the mission field he wrote 'Lift up your Heads, ye Gates of Brass',[25] taking the image from Psalm 24:7–9, but calling the hymn 'China Evangelized'. 'Hark! The Song of Jubilee'[26] was written for the London Missionary Society in 1819 'with special reference to the renunciation

[23] *The English Hymnal* (hereafter *EH*), 481.
[24] *MHB*, 685.
[25] *MHB*, 265.
[26] *MHB*, 829.

of Idolatry, and acknowledgment of the Gospel, in the Georgian Isles of the South Seas' (referring to Tahiti and the neighbouring islands).

Montgomery was a busy layman, a newspaper editor in Sheffield. His hymns are sharp and to the point, with no words wasted. His contemporaries in Romantic period hymnody, Reginald Heber (1783–1826), John Keble (1792–1866) and Henry Hart Milman (1791–1868), were clergymen of the Church of England. Keble's *The Christian Year* and Heber's *Hymns Written and Adapted to the Weekly Church Service of the Year* (which included twelve of Milman's hymns, among them 'Ride on! Ride on in majesty'[27]) both appeared in 1827. As the titles of these books suggest, the hymns were primarily based on the great festivals, the saints' days, and the Sundays of the Church of England year; but the individual hymns were closely based on Holy Scripture. Heber's hymn for Trinity Sunday, 'Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty'[28] begins with the *Ter Sanctus* but is based on the Epistle for that day, Revelation 4:8–11, with imagery also taken from the psalms, notably Psalm 18, and from Exodus (20:21, 33:20). Keble's book, which became a Victorian best-seller, prefaced each poem or hymn with a quotation from the Bible: frequently these were taken from the Gospel or Epistle for the day, but on other occasions, even on the Thursday before Easter, Good Friday and Easter Eve, they came from the Old Testament. The quotations form a paratext that is a guide to the interpretation of the poem that follows: without them the poem has no direction or apparent purpose. On some days the occasion fades into the background, and the poem provides an exegesis and reflection on the biblical verse.

Heber was a bishop, Milman an eminent dean and Keble a parish priest (as was Lyte). They could not be identified with the Evangelical element of the Church of England, and their poems and hymns encouraged others who had previously been suspicious of hymnody, associating it with enthusiasts and Nonconformists. Slowly, the prejudice against the use of hymns in worship disappeared. As John Ellerton (1826–93) put it, the use of hymns

> came to us from an unwelcome source – from the Dissenters, eminently from the Methodists; it was first adopted by those of the clergy who sympathized most with them; for many long years it was that dreaded thing, a 'party badge'; but it held its ground until wise men of all parties began to recognize its value.[29]

[27] *EH*, 620.
[28] *EH*, 162.
[29] Housman, *John Ellerton*, p. 185.

Ellerton describes the process very well: the initial suspicion, the disquiet about the origins of the practice of hymn-singing, the 'holding of the ground', the first Anglican sympathisers and their attempts to introduce hymns. Books such as Edward Bickersteth's *Christian Psalmody* (1833) and W. J. Hall's *Psalms and Hymns adapted to the Services of the Church of England* (1836) were forerunners of the final step in the acceptance of hymns in worship, signalled by the astonishing success of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1861). In that book (and in succeeding editions, up to and including that of 1904) every hymn was prefaced by a biblical quotation, as if to legitimise the text. No author's name appeared, so that the textual presentation suggested, not very subtly, that the provenance was from the Bible rather than from any human agency.

In reality the provenance was from sources both 'ancient' and 'modern', and the book's innocuous title hides the largest subtext in English hymnody. It succeeded in balancing tradition and innovation, including the Latin hymns of the early church to satisfy the Anglo-Catholics and the hymns of the Nonconformists and Lutheran reformers for the Low Church adherents (Keble's advice to the compilers was 'make it comprehensive'). For Ellerton's summary, accurate though it is, conceals the way in which hymns were used in the battle for the soul of the church. Isaac Williams's deliberately unmetrical translations of hymns from the Parisian Breviary, published during the 1830s, influenced John Chandler (*Hymns of the Primitive Church*, 1837), and in turn Chandler and others influenced the greatest of all translators of Latin and Greek hymns, John Mason Neale (1818–66). Neale and his associates hoped for a Church of England that would cherish its links with the early church; opposed to them were those who promoted the claims of the reformers through the translation of German hymnody, Frances Elizabeth Cox (1812–97), Catherine Winkworth (1827–78) and others. Translation became an ideological act: what was translated was a statement of churchmanship, sometimes emphasised by a polemical preface, such as that of Richard Massie in *Martin Luther's Spiritual Songs* (1854), in which he robustly declared, 'the longer I live, the longer I learn to bless God for the Reformation'.[30] In the context of mid-Victorian religion this was clearly intended to be inflammatory.

Hymns Ancient and Modern was deliberately anti-inflammatory. By including both 'ancient' (from Latin, above all) and 'modern' (post-Reformation) hymns, it succeeded in making the hymn-singing tradition more central. It could include 'A Hymn for Martyrs Sweetly Sing' ('Hymnum canentes martyrum'[31])

[30] Richard Massie, *Martin Luther's Spiritual Songs* (London: Hatchard, 1854), p. xiii. For a full discussion of this topic see Watson, 'Ancient or Modern'.

[31] *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (hereafter *A&M*), 53.

and 'Now Thank We All Our God' ('Nun danket alle Gott'[32]). All parts of the church could find something to represent their interests. It was similarly eclectic in its use of the Bible. It followed the church year from Advent to Trinity, omitting the Sundays after Trinity in favour of a large section of 'General Hymns', related to any part of the Bible. Sometimes the 'sting' of a hymn was drawn by this process. Toplady's 'Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me',[33] for example, was shorn of the lines about the futility of good works ('Not the labours of my hands/ Can fulfil thy law's demands') and given the reference to 1 Corinthians 10:4: 'That rock was Christ'. The hymn turns to Christ as Saviour, turning Toplady's Calvinism into a general prayer. Similarly, Doddridge's 'My God, and is thy Table Spread'[34] is given the bland quotation 'Come, for all things are now ready' instead of Doddridge's 'God's name profaned, when his Table is treated with Contempt, Malachi 1:12'. Like many other hymns in *Hymns Ancient and Modern* it was also given a doxology for the final verse (the Trinitarian *Gloria Patri* developed from Luke 2:14), which ended the hymn in a way that was clearly designed to press it into the service of orthodox and mainstream devotion.

The 'General Hymns' section was succeeded by hymns for Holy Communion, Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Matrimony and Ember Days, followed by 'Missions'. The section on missionary work, beginning with Heber's 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains',[35] is evidence of a major interest of Victorian religion, one that throws the emphasis on to certain biblical texts. Heber's famous lines 'The heathen in his blindness/ Bows down to wood and stone' (from 2 Kgs. 19:18, Isa. 37:19 and above all Ezek. l 20:32) applied the Old Testament narratives to the nations who were deprived of the one true gospel. The quotation above Heber's hymn in *Hymns Ancient and Modern* is 'Come over … And help us' (from Acts 16:9), where the omission of 'unto Macedonia' generalises the appeal, suggesting a global situation in which the nations with other religions are crying out – 'please, please, come and convert us'. The other hymns in this section choose equally powerful texts: 'The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few' (Matt. 9:37); 'That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations' (Ps. 67:2); 'And God said, Let there be light: and there was light' (Gen. 1:3). The last of these appears above the hymn by John Marriott (1780–1825), 'Thou whose

[32] *A&M*, 1861, 238.
[33] *A&M*, 1861, 150.
[34] *A&M*, 1861, 204.
[35] *A&M*, 1861, 217.

Almighty Word',[36] which takes up the phrase from the preface to the Geneva Bible from 1 Peter 2:9:

> Hear us, we humbly pray,
> And where the Gospel-day
> Sheds not its glorious ray
> Let there be light!

The missionaries of the nineteenth century, brave men and women all of them, went out (often with a life expectancy of no more than a year or two in places such as West Africa) to bring people out of the darkness of unbelief. Dressed in cassock and surplice, and carrying *Hymns Ancient and Modern* under their arms, they were inspired by an idea that one day, in God's good time and purpose, all the world would come to know the unique blessings of Christianity:

> So be it, Lord: Thy throne shall never
> Like earth's proud empires, pass away;
> Thy kingdom stands, and grows for ever,
> Till all Thy creatures own thy sway.[37]

Ellerton's hymn has a vision of the whole world, spinning through space ('While earth rolls onward into light'), but it begins with the Church of England at Matins and Evensong ('To Thee our morning hymns ascended/ Thy praise shall sanctify our rest'). It also compresses the Bible, moving from Genesis 1 ('The day Thou gavest, Lord') to Revelation 5 ('Till all thy creatures own thy sway' from verse 13, 'and every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth').

That great hymn appeared in *Church Hymns* (1871, later *Church Hymns with Tunes*, 1874, with Arthur Sullivan as music editor). This book was the only real challenge to the supremacy of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. It too produced the hymns without the authors' names but with a biblical quotation at the head (with a text reference). It was never as successful as *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, but it shared with that book a similar place, between the Bible and the church. From the Bible came the authority; for the church came the use: the application of the versified Bible for the people of God. At times Anglican practice led to, or suggested, readings of the Bible in hymnody that reinforced the church's sense of its own identity. When Sir Henry Williams Baker (1821–77)

[36] *A&M*, 1861, 220.
[37] 'The Day Thou Gavest, Lord, is Ended', *EH*, 277.

paraphrased the 23rd Psalm in 'The King of Love my Shepherd Is',[38] he turned part of it into a description of Holy Communion in an Anglican parish on a Sunday morning:

Thou spreadst a table in my sight;
Thy unction grace bestoweth;
And O what transport of delight
From thy pure chalice floweth!

Other denominations produced their versions of this Bible–Hymns–Church equation. The massive *Primitive Methodist Hymnal* (1889), with 1,052 hymns, began with God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, and the Holy Trinity (1–201); immediately afterwards it had a section on 'The Holy Scriptures' (201–13), which must have been thought necessary as a preliminary to 'Man' ('His Fallen Condition', 'His Redemption', 'Warnings and Invitations', 214–68). The main body of the book, from 269 to 682, concentrated on 'Christian Life' in a number of sections, divided into 'Its Experience', 'Its Privileges' and 'Its Duties'. In this way the emphasis was placed on the church as a fellowship of thinking and feeling 'men', exploring the Bible through hymns as a guide to individual conduct and independent thought: the book encouraged a turn back to the Bible rather than to the church, although there was a substantial section on 'Christian Institutions' (and Primitive Methodists were fiercely loyal to their own denomination).

Bible reading at home, or when alone, had always been recommended. Charles Wesley's 'When quiet in my house I sit/ Thy book be my companion still'[39] was thought indispensable in Methodist books from 1780 to the *Methodist Hymn Book* of 1933 (it was dropped from *Hymns and Psalms*, 1983). But public reading was, of course, a necessary part of church services, celebrated by William Walsham How (1823–97, one of the editors of *Church Hymns*):

O word of God incarnate
O Wisdom from on high,
O Truth unchanged, unchanging,
O Light of our dark sky;
We praise Thee for the radiance
That from the hallowed page,
A lantern to our footsteps,
Shines on from age to age.[40]

[38] *EH*, 490.
[39] *MHB*, 310.
[40] *BBC Hymn Book* (hereafter *BBCHB*), 191.

The church received the gift, and the church now had to make that gift known, 'To bear before the nations/ Thy true light, as of old'. We find ourselves again in the mission field, and the black-coated missionaries going out with the Bible in one hand and *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in the other.

There is no sign in these hymns of the debates that raged over the higher criticism. There is no Strauss or Feuerbach. Nor should we expect it. These are hymns for worship, not for theological enquiry. The nearest that they come to acknowledging problems is the verse from 'The Church's One Foundation'[41] by Samuel John Stone (1839–1900) on the controversy arising from Bishop Colenso's writings on the Pentateuch and its effect on the Church of England:

> Though with a scornful wonder
> Men see her sore opprest,
> By schisms rent asunder,
> By heresies distrest . . .

Stone thought, *contra* Colenso, that saints their watch were keeping; and Edward Hayes Plumptre, Dean of Wells (1821–91), who wrote 'Thy hand, O God, has guided/ Thy flock, from age to age'[42] rejoiced that

> Through many a day of darkness,
> Through many a scene of strife,
> The faithful few fought bravely,
> To guard the Nation's life.

Plumptre's verse could be about the faithful in any age, but the verse has a Victorian ring, and the reference to the nation's life an Anglican and patriotic one.

By the end of the nineteenth century, with *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in the full pomp of its second edition (1875) and Supplement (1889), and with many denominational hymnbooks endeavouring to follow its example, a worship-centred reading of the Bible (that is, without any particular theological or ideological hermeneutics) was an accepted part of the church-going experience. Hymns, Bible, Church, all seemed to interact and help each other.[43] But that experience did not ignore the problems of society entirely: this was the age of the Salvation Army, of the Whitechapel Mission, of the Temperance Movement and its raucous hymns ('King Alcohol Shall Surely

[41] *Appendix to Hymns Ancient and Modern*, 320; *EH*, 489.
[42] *A&M*, 2nd edn., with Supplement, 1889, 604; *EH*, 545.
[43] 'One Church, One Faith, One Lord', *A&M*, 1889, 604; *EH*, 545.

Fall'), of Evangelists such as Dwight L. Moody and Rodney 'Gipsy' Smith. Moody's partner in mission, Ira D. Sankey, who gave twenty-three *Sacred Songs and Solos* to a publisher in 1873, and saw the resulting book grow and grow until it contained 1,000 hymns, used the Bible with an eye for the catchy phrase. Later editions of *Sacred Songs and Solos* print these above each hymn, in the manner of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* and *Church Hymns*: 'Underneath are the everlasting arms'; 'The Lord is my rock and my fortress'; 'A Friend of sinners'; 'Made nigh by the blood of Christ'; 'A better land'; 'The trumpet shall sound' ('When the roll is called up yonder'); 'How long halt ye between two opinions?' ('Why not to-night'). As with the earlier books, they served to legitimise the hymns, and even the evangelical procedures of Moody and Sankey themselves.

The longing for comfort, mixed with a certain threatening, that is found in *Sacred Songs and Solos*, is evidence of some needs, human, desperate, hopeless, that the church culture of the age had not been able to touch. In other ways, a new note entered the hymns of this period, one that used parts of the Bible that had been neglected in the celebration of the church and its mission. Henry Scott Holland (1847–1918), one of the founders of the Christian Social Union, used Isaiah 33:22 for 'Judge Eternal, Throned in Splendour'[44] written in 1902: 'For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king: he will save us.' In New York, a year later, Frank Mason North (1850–1935) wrote: 'Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life'[45] on the American Revised Version of Matthew 22:9: 'Go ye therefore unto the partings of the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage feast.' These hymns directed people to those elements in the Bible which emphasised the need for justice, and mercy, honest dealing and a fair society. For the Christian Social Union God was the power that put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the humble and meek; and the growth of the Labour Party was related to this concern, so that it became a commonplace that it owed more to Methodism than to Marx. This admission of a new concern existed alongside the heritage of traditional hymns, and the perpetuation of nineteenth-century values: 'Judge Eternal', for example, while praying 'purge this realm of bitter things', went on to say 'Feed the faint and hungry heathen/ With the richness of thy word', and Lewis Hensley (1827–1905) ended 'Thy Kingdom Come, O God'[46] with the verse

[44] *EH*, 423.
[45] *MHB*, 895.
[46] *EH*, 554, from Matthew 6:10.

O'er heathen lands afar
  Thick darkness broodeth yet:
Arise, O morning Star,
  Arise, and never set![47]

Both of these hymns were included in the *English Hymnal* (1906), a book which opened the twentieth century with a significant break from the *Hymns Ancient and Modern* tradition. Percy Dearmer (1867–1936), the most active and energetic of the editors, was modern in his theology and ecumenical in outlook. The *English Hymnal* was particularly rich in ancient and medieval hymnody, but Dearmer also re-wrote Bunyan's 'Who Would True Valour See' to remove Bunyan's hobgoblin and make it modern;[48] and he included hymns by writers such as G. K. Chesterton[49] and Rudyard Kipling.[50] His talents were fully shown when he had a free hand to edit *Songs of Praise* (1925). This loosened the Bible–Hymn–Church association in two ways: first by including a great many poems by writers such as Spenser, Shakespeare, Blake, Christopher Smart, Shelley, Wordsworth and Thomas Hardy (some of whom were unorthodox, and some even declared unbelievers); second, by aiming the book at the nation as a whole (not the church-going nation) and especially at those 'who bear the responsibility of our national education'. The book was very successful, leading to *Songs of Praise Enlarged* (1931); and although many of his experiments did not stand the test of time, Dearmer was a brilliant editor who probably did more than any other single person to change the course of modern hymnody. He freed hymnbooks from the domination (some would say the stranglehold) of the Bible, and let the imagination loose on the problems and issues of the time. It is symptomatic of his approach that *Songs of Praise Enlarged* began with a section on 'Spring' rather than on the church's year, and that he chose from John Newton's work not 'Amazing Grace' but 'Kindly Spring Again is Here',[51] one of the hymns in which Newton is least dependent on the Bible. He favoured new writers such as Eleanor Farjeon (1881–1965), who wrote 'Morning has Broken',[52] a lovely English watercolour of a hymn; and Jan Struther (1901–53), whose 'Lord of all Hopefulness, Lord

[47] Modern hymnbooks which print this hymn change the first line of this verse into the innocuous 'O'er lands both near and far'.
[48] 'He who would valiant be', *EH*, 402.
[49] 'O God of Earth and Altar', *EH*, 562.
[50] 'God of our Fathers, Known of Old', *EH*, 558.
[51] *Songs of Praise Enlarged* (hereafter *SofPE*), 2.
[52] *SofPE*, 30.

of all Joy'[53] rapidly became a favourite with university students, as Dearmer reported with obvious pleasure.[54]

The first major hymnbook to appear after *Songs of Praise Enlarged*, the *Methodist Hymn Book* of 1933, showed little sign of accepting this breezy new influence. It was a book for the newly united Methodist church, and played safe, in a dignified and distinguished way; nor, in the years following the Second World War, was there much sign of originality in *Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised* (1950). The book that inherited the *Songs of Praise* spirit most clearly was the *BBC Hymn Book* of 1950, because its non-denominational origins in what was then called 'the wireless' allowed – indeed, forced – it to be ecumenical; but that book was much more conservative than *Songs of Praise*. It contained very little modern poetry: the most noticeable examples were three poems by John Arlott (1914–91), who worked for the BBC and later became a famous cricket commentator. They were set for 'Plough Sunday', Rogationtide and Harvest,[55] and they are hymns of a nature lover, describing the land and offering a prayer. The outstanding new hymn-writers in the book were Timothy Rees (1874–1939) and Cyril Argentine Alington (1872–1955). Rees, who became Bishop of Llandaff, used the Lord's Prayer, from Matthew 6, bouncing its second phrase against the wall of the contemporary world:

> In our worship, Lord most holy,
> Hallowed be thy name;
> In our work, however lowly,
> Hallowed be thy name.
> In each heart's imagination,
> In the Church's adoration,
> In the conscience of the nation,
> Hallowed be thy name.[56]

Alington was the master of the grand manner, phrases from his Bible effortlessly subsumed into fluent verse, as in this hymn on 1 Peter 2:3–10:

> Ye that know the Lord is gracious,
> Ye for whom a corner-stone
> Stands, of God elect and precious,
> Laid that ye may build thereon;
> See that on a sure foundation

[53] *SofPE*, 565.
[54] Dearmer and Jacob, *Songs of Praise Discussed*, p. 301.
[55] *BBCHB*, 431, 435, 440.
[56] 'God of Love and Truth and Beauty', *Hymns Ancient and Modern New Standard* (hereafter *HA&MNS*), 368.

Ye a living temple raise,
Towers that may foretell salvation,
Walls that may re-echo praise.[57]

This is architecture as metaphor, but it is cathedral-architecture hymnody; not surprisingly perhaps, for Alington was Dean of Durham. Its relationship to the life of post-war Britain is similar to that of the great cathedrals to the cities and counties around them, monuments in the landscape and part of the soul of the nation, loved and admired, but increasingly standing over against the post-war world as it changed to become an increasingly materialistic and secular culture. Here the hymn used the passage from 1 Peter as renewed affirmation, as a preacher might do, defiantly, *Dunelm contra mundum*: against a tawdry secular culture, Alington set the Bible.

Alington's response to the age was that of a great dignitary of the Church of England. An alternative response was to attempt to come to terms with the culture, and this could lead hymn-writers away from the Bible. A conspicuous example is the hymn by the Methodist Richard Jones (b. 1926), beginning 'God of concrete, God of steel'.[58] It could be argued that the last line of each verse, 'All the world of power/speed/truth is thine', is reminiscent of the psalms, but to the reader or singer this appears secondary to the provocatively modernist intent ('God of map and graph and chart/ Lord of physics and research'). Christian doctrine appears in the final verse, almost as an 'add-on':

God whose glory fills the earth,
Gave the universe its birth,
Loosed the Christ with Easter's might,
Saves the world from evil's blight,
Claims mankind by grace divine,
All the world of love is thine!

Hymn-writers of this period were looking both ways, aware that they must turn back to the Bible and outward to the world. The Congregationalist Albert Bayly (1901–84) pleaded for a peaceful use of atomic energy in 'O Lord of Every Shining Constellation':

You, Lord, have made the atom's hidden forces,
  Your laws its mighty energies fulfil;
Teach us, to whom you give such rich resources,
  In all we use, to serve your holy will.[59]

[57] *HA&MNS*, 175.
[58] *HA&MNS*, 366.
[59] *HA&MNS*, 411.

But Bayly also wrote a series of hymns on the Hebrew prophets, and wrote a hymn in 1960 'for the 350th Anniversary of the Authorized Version of the Bible', in which verse 2 runs:

> So let us keep a festival of praise,
> With joyous anthems of commemoration,
> For servants of God's Word in former days
> Who gave his holy book to bless our nation.
> Blest was the scholar's task,
> The hearts God's Spirit stirred,
> From ancient tongues to English speech
> To bring the living word.[60]

A year later these words would begin to become obsolete, with unexpected consequences, both good and unforeseen. The good consequences were that the coming of the New English Bible, New Testament in 1961 helped to solve the problems of modern hymn-writers by providing a new language. Timothy Dudley-Smith (b. 1926) began his distinguished career as a hymn-writer with a metrical version of the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46–55), 'Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord'[61] and since that time his hymns have consistently been what he calls 'a door for the word'.[62] His 'Christ is the Bread of Life Indeed',[63] for example, is 'based on the seven "I am" passages in St John's Gospel', and his major collection, *A House of Praise* (2003), has an 'Index of Biblical and other Sources'. In a different mode, the Methodist poet Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000) worked the biblical narrative into a modern form, in which the events of the Passion have a striking resemblance to the politics of totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century:

> In that dawn of blows and lies
> Church and state conspire to kill,
> Hang three rebels on a hill.
>
> Innocent and guilty drown
> In a flood of blood and sweat.
> How much darker can it get?[64]

In the 1960s and 1970s Pratt Green was one of the few hymn-writers to acknowledge openly that there were problems of belief in a modern world:

[60] 'Now All our Hearts in Thanksgiving Unite', in Bayly, *Rejoice O People*, p. 41.
[61] *HA&MNS*, 422.
[62] The title of Dudley-Smith's 2006 collection.
[63] Dudley-Smith, *A House of Praise*, 219.
[64] 'Jesus in the Olive Grove', *Hymns and Psalms*, 169.

When our confidence is shaken
In beliefs we thought secure;
When the spirit in its sickness
Seeks but cannot find a cure:
God is active in the tensions
Of a faith not yet mature.[65]

In the late twentieth century there were two demands on the hymn-writer: to reaffirm the gospel in modern terms (Dudley-Smith has a hymn beginning 'Affirm anew the threefold Name'[66]) and also to engage with an indifferent and sometimes hostile world. The first of these was most memorably, and sometimes controversially, fulfilled by the Jubilate Group, which produced *Hymns for Today's Church* in 1982, with 'you' substituted for 'thou' even in the most loved of traditional texts ('The day you gave us, Lord, is ended'). Beneath the modernising, however, there was a strong and faithful adherence to the central features of Christian belief, without partisanship or denominationalism. Michael Saward's (b. 1932) 'Christ Triumphant, Ever Reigning',[67] for example, follows Charles Wesley[68] in linking Luke 2 with Philippians 2:

Word incarnate, truth revealing,
Son of Man on earth!
Power and majesty concealing
by your humble birth: . . .

His hymn is traditional in linking the Passion and the Atonement, the Gospel narratives and Romans 5:

suffering servant, scorned, ill-treated,
victim crucified!
Death is through the cross defeated,
sinners justified: . . .

Similarly, Christopher Idle (b. 1938) affirms his faith anew, in hymns based on the *Te Deum*,[69] on Revelation 7,[70] or on a prayer by Alcuin.[71] Sometimes the modernity is helped by new music, as in the paraphrase by Richard Bewes

[65] 'When our Confidence is Shaken', *Hymns and Psalms*, 686.
[66] Dudley-Smith, *A House of Praise*, 250.
[67] *Hymns for Today's Church* (hereafter *HfTC*), 173.
[68] 'Glory Be to God on High', *MHB*, 134.
[69] 'God, we Praise You! God, we Bless You!', *HfTC*, 341.
[70] 'Here, from All Nations, All Tongues, and All Peoples', *HfTC*, 571.
[71] 'Eternal Light, Shine in my Heart', *HfTC*, 339.

(b. 1934) of Psalm 46,[72] set to an arrangement of the *Dam Busters* march by Eric Coates.

Parallel to the work of the Jubilate Group, but very different, was the work of Sydney Carter (1915–2004), whose Good Friday poem is a monologue spoken by the penitent thief on the cross, best known for its refrain 'It's God they ought to crucify / instead of you and me'.[73] Unlike Carter's better-known 'Lord of the Dance',[74] the irony of 'It's God they ought to crucify' is probably too strong for congregational use; but its use of the Bible demonstrates the continuing importance of the Bible as a code, without which these hymns would be incomprehensible.

Different again is the work of the Iona Community in Scotland, which has been remarkably successful in balancing in hymnody the needs of the modern world and the truths of the Bible. If the Jubilate Group is modern / traditional, and if Carter is modern / unorthodox, the 'Wild Goose Songs' of the Iona Community seem strangely flexible, able to accommodate human need, cries for justice and traditional teaching. Many of them are by John Bell (b. 1949), including versions of the psalms which add to the long tradition of Scottish metrical psalmody, and paraphrases such as 'Comfort, comfort now my people' from Isaiah 40.[75] With his co-writer Graham Maule (b. 1958) he can approach biblical events from an unusual direction, in the manner of Sydney Carter: thus a hymn on the Annunciation begins 'No wind at the window, / no knock on the door',[76] and the Christmas hymn 'Who Would Think That What was Needed'[77] moves from a meditation on what the earth requires to 'God surprises earth with heaven, / coming here on Christmas Day'. At other times the attack on injustice is more direct, as in 'Inspired by Love and Anger', which loops back, like Albert Bayly, to remember the Old Testament prophets:

> To God, who through the prophets
> proclaimed a different age,
> we offer earth's indifference,
> in agony and rage:
> when will the wrongs be righted?
> When will the kingdom come?
> When will the world be generous
> to all instead of some?[78]

[72] 'God is our Strength and Refuge', *HfTC*, 527.
[73] 'Friday Morning', in Carter, *Green Print for Song*, p. 28.
[74] 'I Danced in the Morning when the World was Begun', in Carter, *Green Print for Song*, p. 84.
[75] *Church Hymnary* (hereafter *CH*), 274.
[76] *CH*, 287.
[77] *CH*, 295.
[78] *CH*, 253.

A multiple portrait of Christ from the Gospels is represented in 'Jesus Christ is waiting/ waiting in the streets',[79] in which, in successive verses, he is 'waiting'/'raging'/'healing'/'dancing'/'calling'; and the call to Levi (Mark 2:14, Luke 5:27) becomes a demanding exploration of the Christian life in 'Will you Come and Follow Me'.[80]

Bell and Maule are exceptional in their ability to take the Bible and project it, as it were, on a screen for the twenty-first century. Their application of the gospel to the tragic human condition is a Scottish displacement of the gospel hymns that were part of the Afro-American tradition in the USA. There the Bible, movingly rendered into slave songs, became a source of comfort and hope to a downtrodden and helpless underclass, exploited as workers and denied their rights as citizens. Here the Old Testament, and especially Exodus, provided the pattern that was to inspire the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s:

> When Israel was in Egypt's land: Let my people go,
> Oppressed so hard they could not stand, Let my people go.
> Go down, Moses, Way down in Egypt land,
> Tell ole Pharoh, Let my people go.[81]

Moses is a hero, and so are Gideon[82] and Daniel, but the note of bitter experience is found everywhere in these songs: 'I'm a rolling, I'm a rolling thro' an unfriendly world';[83] 'No more auction block for me'.[84] It was made bearable by the prospect of the entry into the Promised Land.[85] The image of the chariot, as in 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot',[86] is from the story of Elijah in 2 Kings 2; but many of the images for heaven come from adaptations of Revelation:

> What kind of shoes you going to wear? Golden slippers!
> Golden slippers I'm bound to wear, That outshine the glittering sun.[87]

The thought of heaven helped to make the miseries of slavery bearable; but there was no excuse for what happened, and the Bible made that very clear. The Bible also underpinned the Civil Rights movement: when Martin Luther King spoke to the March on Washington on 28 August 1963, he said, 'I have a

[79] *CH*, 360.
[80] *CH*, 533.
[81] Marsh, *Jubilee Singers*, 19. The examples that follow are taken from this work.
[82] 'Oh, the Band of Gideon', in Marsh, *Jubilee Singers*, 109.
[83] Marsh, *Jubilee Singers*, 9.
[84] Marsh, *Jubilee Singers*, 23.
[85] 'Gwine to Ride up in the Chariot, Sooner in the Morning', in Marsh, *Jubilee Singers*, 14.
[86] Marsh, *Jubilee Singers*, 2.
[87] Marsh, *Jubilee Singers*, 47.

dream that one day every valley shall be exalted and every hill and mountain shall be made low. The rough places will be made plain and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.' By the time he got to the end of the sentence, one hundred thousand voices were shouting 'to-geth-er!' (I know: I was there). He was depending on a shared knowledge of Isaiah 40; his communication with that vast crowd through the Bible was electrifying.[88]

All that has gone now. The Bible exists in so many modern translations that we now have no version that can exist in the common mind. This has given new opportunities to hymn-writers, but it has led to loss as well as gain. What has been lost is the great shared store of imagery, proverb and language that inspired hymn-writers from the Reformation until the last part of the twentieth century. Often that language was strange and odd, but it stimulated the imagination: indeed, Rowan Williams has drawn attention to what he calls 'the importance of the odd and the piquant in hymns', and contrasted it with what he has called 'the language of piety and good intention . . . the language, alas, of a great many clergy and laity in the churches; not a language that is tough, peculiar, occasionally grotesque and embarrassing, physically alert – the language of the Bible'.[89] Certainly the task of the hymn-writer has become more difficult with the loss of a common language, and that is one of the unforeseen consequences of multiple new translations. A writer such as Alington (and Charles Wesley before him) could roll the great phrases into his verse almost effortlessly, as in 'Ye that Know the Lord is Gracious', quoted above. The remedy, if there is one, lies in plain speaking, and it is possible that this is the secret of the success of John Bell and Graham Maule.

They are two among many contemporary hymn-writers who are addressing the problems of the age. Fred Pratt Green, in a poem written about 1962 called 'The Skating Parson', on the painting in the National Gallery of Scotland of the Reverend Robert Walker skating on Duddingston Loch (the date must be *c*. 1800), drew attention to the difference between Walker's time and his own: 'He skates on solid ice, and I on thin'.[90]

Pratt Green's line is a clever application of a proverbial utterance, neatly applied to the painting and to his own situation. Repeated in every verse, it

[88] The use of hymnody by the Civil Rights movement in the USA finds its counterpart in the 'liberation hymnody' of Latin America and South Africa. There is a fine discussion of this in Hawn, *Gather into One*. See esp. pp. 137 ff.

[89] Rowan Williams, 'Beyond Aesthetics: Theology and Hymnody', an address to an International Hymn Society Conference, York, 1997: reprinted in the *Bulletin of the Hymn Society* 213 (October 1997), pp. 73–8.

[90] Pratt Green, *The Skating Parson*, pp. 48–9.

is a reminder that he was writing in an age which began the still-unfinished process of un-churching the culture of western Europe and challenging the whole structure of religious belief. But it may be the thin ice that makes contemporary hymn-writing both exciting and exacting, even improbable, in the twenty-first century, a century that has begun with terrorism, wars, bad governments, overpopulation, cheap mass culture and global warming. If the nineteenth-century missionaries wrote hymns with the Bible in one hand and the prayer-book in the other, writers of the twenty-first century are more likely to start with a modern translation of the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other.

Conclusion

JOHN RICHES

The last two 250 years have seen dramatic changes in the history of the reception of the Bible. Its availability and distribution have increased immeasurably. Thanks to the development of new printing technologies and the work of Bible societies and churches and other faith communities both in distribution and translation, it is now available almost universally. Only in those countries where there are ideological, political and religious objections to its distribution, or in those parts of the world where there are still no translations, is access to it restricted.

The same period has also seen the development of new directions and methods in the study of the Bible. The rise of historical consciousness in western Europe and North America initiated a period of great critical scrutiny and theological debate as scholars and theologians sought to understand the origins of the religious beliefs which were documented in the Bible; and also to understand the processes by which these beliefs had found written form and by which individual writings had subsequently been collected together as authoritative texts for different faith communities, Christian and Jewish.

These developments in, on the one hand, the distribution and, on the other, the critical, historical understanding of the Bible, have run side by side and their interaction has been complex and requires much further study. The embedding of the Bible in the very different and diverse cultures of Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and North America has had the effect of generating very different understandings, not only of individual texts and writers but of the whole canon of Scripture itself. At the same time, theological education has become more international, movements of populations more extensive, all of which has provided significant opportunities for the spread of critical studies of the Bible and, in turn, for the new ways of reading the Bible which have been growing up across the world to be brought into the purview of

Western/Northern study of the Bible. A study of the topics presented at the large international meetings of the Society of Bible Literature would provide prima facie evidence for the cross-fertilisation of different understandings and perspectives.

A volume such as this can document only some of the major aspects of developments through the period. What follows here, by way of concluding reflections, is partial and will doubtless reflect personal perspectives and interests. But after some seven years of engagement with the work offered here perhaps such individual reflection may be permitted.

What has struck me most, beyond the obvious fact of the enormous expansion of the use of the Bible during this period and its subsequent embeddedness in a range of very different cultures, is the way the Bible has itself changed as a consequence. This change is, at the very least, of two kinds. In the first place, the Bible changes every time it is translated. This is true in a measure of translations within the same language, but more remarkably when the translation is into a new language. At this point inevitably, the translation of key theological terms and ideas into different languages means that they will, in a considerable measure, assume the associations of those terms in the receptor language. It is right to say that this is only a partial assumption of associations within the language of the translation but, nevertheless, the process of reception of the new texts within a particular natural language will be continual as people within a given language group work to make the texts their own, to read them in the light of their own inherited beliefs and practices and to allow them to inform and transform that inheritance, including their language itself.

And this process, too, is by no means a purely localised one. The influence of particular denominations with their complex histories as well as the interaction with critical historical studies of the texts will also make itself felt. In addition, the Bible is brought by missionaries, expatriates with their own particular self-understandings, who may well stand in a somewhat marginal relationship to their sending church.

The reception of the Bible, that is to say, has been highly contested. As it has been indigenised, has rejuvenated local cultures and generated new readings, so it has become less and less the book that the missionaries brought. As new understandings have taken root in new forms of community and leadership, so the Bible has, as it were, been wrested from the control of those who brought it. This point is brought out in numerous stories, such as the one in Gerald West's account of the work of the African preacher Isaiah Shembe, where two African boys copy the Bible of their master so as to gain the power

and knowledge to build their own communities. The Bible is liberated from its colonial captors and becomes free to bring new life to the indigenous population.

This is however not just a story about access and ownership: it is also a story about understanding and interpretation. Again, within the African context, the Bible has been co-opted by both sides in the colonial struggle. It has been seen as a text which can justify the subjugation of indigenous peoples as well as one which can resource and inspire their struggle for liberation. What is striking is the fact that in a continent like Africa, where the Bible could so easily be co-opted to justify racial division and discrimination, nevertheless it remained a text, for the most part at least, cherished and indeed respected by both parties to the debate. The Bible was the all-powerful, and indeed empowering, text.

Its earlier use on both sides of the debate about the abolition of slavery provides a further powerful example of the Bible's ambiguity. What is interesting to note is that the Bible becomes a 'site of struggle' most acutely in those cultures where its authority is largely, or indeed wholly, uncontested. In the anti-slavery debates of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there were indeed other texts, to which appeal could be made, not least among the writings of the rationalists, but still, if the debate was to be won in the wider public sphere, then the abolitionists needed to claim the Bible for their own. They had to show that the biblical commands to love one's neighbour applied equally to slave and master. And they could do that only by appealing to a broader principle that a slave was to be seen as a man and a brother.

What is perhaps the most striking about the narratives of the Bible's entry into Africa, Asia and Latin America is the fact that it is accorded such differing kinds of authority in these continents, different in each of the three named but different too by comparison with the authority which it had previously enjoyed among the 'mainstream denominations'. There is a major danger of oversimplification here, but some risks may be worth running.

Within Orthodoxy, the Bible remains principally the book of the liturgy. Its texts and phrases and cadences supply the language of the liturgy with its celebration of biblical history and the church's year. In this sense it is central to the life of the church. It also was crucial to the development of the theology of the Fathers, but there it remains in a sense encased. Interpretation of the biblical text is conducted through catenas of quotations from the Fathers. There was no question of any clash with the tradition. The tradition enshrined in the ecumenical councils and the teaching of the Fathers simply gave the authoritative account of its meaning. The church of the West engaged more actively

with the Scriptures. Its theologians were doctors of sacred Scripture and the church's teaching evolved through dialogue with Scripture, theology and philosophy. Nevertheless, if there were a conflict between suggested meanings of Scripture and church teaching it was the magisterium, the teaching authority of the church, which would decide, and that effectively meant the tradition. One might say that for neither East nor West was it thinkable that the canonical Scriptures could conflict with the teaching of the church.

This position was effectively and devastatingly challenged at the Reformation. The Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* asserted the authority of Scripture *over* the tradition, and therefore over the interpretations of the magisterium. Scripture now became the sole arbiter of revealed truth, which in turn raised questions of its proper interpretation. These were hardly answered, in a context where its sense was so vigorously disputed on all sides, by assertions of its clarity. On the contrary, as one contemporary Catholic writer asserted, what was needed was a rule of interpretation which would deliver the true meaning of the Scripture with the same reliability as a ruler produces a straight line.[1] Such a rule would bring peace to the warring factions in the Western church. In default of such a rule, Catholics such as Valerianus Magni would continue to argue that the authority of the church was to be preferred over that of individual interpretations of Scripture. Luther, as a teacher of sacred Scripture, would continue to argue for the persuasiveness of his readings of Scripture, derived as they were from study of the biblical canon and of the interpretations of the Fathers.[2]

This struggle over the proper method of biblical interpretation provides the context for the development of historical studies of the Bible. Such studies have deep roots in the biblical studies of the Reformation, which in turn drew deeply on the philological and critical studies of the Renaissance. The rise of historical study in the eighteenth century gave an added rigour to the interpretation of texts and remained an ambiguous partner for orthodox interpretation of the Bible. It might indeed claim to give an objective, assured interpretation of texts but, at the same time, it exposed contradictions between the canonical writings and challenged traditional interpretations. Worst of all, it failed to give the singularity of meaning required if the Bible were to function as an unambiguous arbiter of revealed truth. Reception historical studies of the

[1] Valerianus Magni, quoted in K. Scholder, *The Birth of Critical Theology: Origins and Problems of Biblical Criticism in the Seventeenth Century* (London: SCM Press, 1990), p. 14.

[2] 'Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Works (1545)', trans. Brother Andrew Thornton, OSB, available at www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/preflat-eng.text.

Bible demonstrate with clarity the great diversity of serious historical readings which can be given of any particular text.

The account here of the development of historical studies of the Bible is followed by the story of the subsequent development of theological study of the Bible. In one sense one could see it as the account of the various attempts to come to terms with the failure of historical studies to deliver the hoped-for clarity and singularity of interpretation; in another as the attempt to find new methods of interpretations which would allow the Bible to continue to speak with authority and to address contemporary matters of concern. One of the most interesting aspects of this story is the emergence in liberation theology of an interpretative strategy which sets the Bible alongside the experience of the reading community, seeing both as texts to be interpreted, 'reading with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other'. This enables interpreters to find different meanings in the same biblical texts, as they resonate differently with the accounts of human experience which they bring to them. At the same time these different meanings acquire authority in so far as they are able to address such experience and enable reading communities to make sense of and to find ways of responding to the demands which are made on them.

Such readings bear striking resemblance to Jewish midrashic readings as described by Judah Goldin:

> This conviction lies at the heart of Midrash all the time: the Scriptures are not only a record of the past but a prophecy, a foreshadowing and foretelling, of what will come to pass. And if that is the case, text and personal experience are not two autonomous domains. On the contrary they are mutually enlightening: even as the immediate event helps make the age-old sacred text intelligible, so in turn the text reveals the fundamental significance of the recent event or experience.[3]

It is perhaps not accidental that such readings of Scripture from experience should have their roots in situations of severe oppression and hardship. Goldin writes in the context of a discussion of retellings of the story of Abraham and Isaac, which were often painfully informed by Jewish experience of persecution and slaughter, not least at the time of the Crusades in Europe. The *campesinos* of Latin America have their own stories to tell of persecution and dispossession, in the light of which they too read the Bible.

But liberation theology is not the only theological development to emerge from South America. Pentecostalism, for all its roots in the United States, was

[3] Judah Goldin, in Shalomo Spiegel, *The Last Trial* (Vermont: Light Springs, 1993), introduction, p. xx.

nevertheless formed as a global urban church phenomenon in the cities of the South. It has been a movement which has allowed families and communities to survive in the *favela*s and 'informal settlements' of the global South and which has given rise to one of the – the? – fastest-growing religious movements in the world. Apart from rooting its own ecstatic experience in the biblical accounts of the *charismata* of the early church, Pentecostalism's use of the Bible is relatively usual for any Evangelical group. Nevertheless, the Bible does lend its huge authority to a movement which derives much of its influence from its adherents' spiritual experience and from its rootedness in local belief and tradition.

But the most remarkable feature of this narrative is that of the growing prominence of the Bible in continents where, till the beginning of the nineteenth century, it had had very little presence or support: Africa and Asia. The emergence of the Bible as a powerful cultural force within Africa after the end of colonialism was, to many, a surprise. It might have been thought that a book which was so closely associated with the colonial powers would rapidly lose its appeal. But a moment's reflection shows this to be too simplistic. In the first place, in many cases Africans had drawn on the resources of the Bible (and in some cases, not least in Malawi, the support of the missionaries, too) in their struggle for independence. For all that it had been used as a book against them, to oppress, it was also a book whose strength they had come to learn as they sought to weld together a revolutionary force against the colonisers. But secondly, where else would they have turned? It is true that some tried to find support in the writings of Karl Marx, but this was hardly likely in the long run to be a text that would capture Africa. The Qur'an was still too restricted in its distribution to be a real force in the struggle for independence, despite the fact that it can lend itself readily enough to the support of those who fight for freedom from foreign domination. And while the spirit-world of African Traditional Religion was and is something which inspires deep allegiance and resolution, it has neither the universality of the Bible nor has it found significant literary form. In the first place, while there is undoubtedly a strong commonality between different forms of African Traditional Religion, they also all have strong local traditions and ties and cannot rival the easy portability of the Bible, even though they remain in every case a cultural force to challenge the churches and to draw them into ever new alliances. But it is the second feature, its literacy and with it its public 'voice', that makes the Bible such a unique force in late twentieth-century African life. West records the deep impression made on a group of Southern Africans by an early missionary who takes out his Bible in order to impose discipline and authority on his small

travelling group. Here was an external authority which could be appealed to in order to create a sacred space in which the values of the group could be upheld and enforced. The very presence of this book – perhaps better, its formal, ritual opening – was enough to assert the authority of those who opened and presented it; it would however be a two-edged authority which could be used against those who claimed to have it on their side, *if one knew how to use it*. In this sense the emergence of indigenous preachers and religious leaders who could draw on the Bible and use it effectively in public debate and political struggle was a vital factor, making possible the Bible's acceptance throughout Africa.

The rich history of the Bible in nineteenth- and particularly twentieth-century Africa leads to a remarkable conclusion: that the Bible has, over many parts of Africa, unqualified power and authority. This is the canonical, authoritative book, which is challenged as a book at most by the Qur'an, a challenge which is relative late on the scene (though it will almost certainly grow). In this respect the Bible's authority is perhaps greater, less open to challenge, than at any time in history. In the early church its authority was conferred on it by the councils of the church. It was subject to the authoritative interpretation of the Fathers and the traditions of the church, indeed to the 'rule of faith', which needed to be invoked in order to bring some order into its diversity and complexity. In the medieval West it would be interpreted alongside the Fathers and the philosophers and would form the subject of vigorous disputation. Even at the Reformation, when the authority of tradition was cast aside, Luther would seek the agreement of the Fathers for his radical questioning of traditional Catholic teaching and, despite his turning away from philosophy, his successors would return to it.

What this will mean for the churches in Africa, and indeed for those churches in Europe and North America which have close and long associations with them, is already emerging: a much greater willingness to strike out on an independent line and a much greater reluctance to attend to arguments from outside the Bible, coupled with a greater readiness to identify 'biblical' positions and views as unalterable and unquestionable.

The position in Asia, certainly over the period covered by this volume, could scarcely be more different, though the comparison is instructive. Within large parts of Asia the Bible entered a world full of texts and libraries, of sacred texts of rich complexity and antiquity, which had shaped the cultures of the Eastern world. Those who brought the Bible encountered a diversity of ancient forms of religion with histories in many cases much older than that of Christianity. Thus in the independence struggle in India after the Second

World War, India's leaders did not need to wrestle for control of the Bible; they had their own traditions to draw on, though this did not prevent Gandhi, in his programme of non-violent resistance, appealing to Jesus' teachings as well as to Hindu notions of *satyagraha*. Islamic reactions to British India would be many and diverse, and provide models for subsequent developments of Islamic thought. All of this is to say that the world of Asia provided a very different context indeed for the Bible to that of Africa.

In such a continent the Bible, if it was to find its place at all, had to be seen as one sacred text alongside a plethora of others, many of which could claim greater antiquity and a far closer engagement with Asian history. Indian Christians may see it as the supreme source and judge of all truth, but this claim has at some level to be made good against the counter-claims of other voices in their society. The very claim to possess a text of such authority and power puts them at odds with others in their society, draws them, willingly or not, into a battle for the heart of their particular national group. Whereas the Bible in Africa, because of its unique position as sacred text, offers a kind of universality over against the localism of African Traditional Religions, in India and elsewhere in Asia it is only one among a large number of competing texts which are the focus of competing nationalisms. In this sense one can well understand the force of Sugirtharajah's plea for a softening of the power and authority of sacred texts in the subcontinent.

This volume has documented a period of rapid change: expansion, criticism, new engagements and alliances in the history of the Bible. As new constellations of power begin to emerge in the third millennium, one can only wonder at the role that the Bible may play in the history which will unfold. What part will it play, if any, in the history of Brazil, Russia, India and China? It will be strange, in the light of the history of the last 250 years, if it does not have much to contribute. Developments in China might already suggest that the religious map of the world is beginning to change in surprising ways.

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